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The University of Southern Mississippi

CHRISTIANITY, THE DUTY TO ASSIST OTHERS, AND SUPEREROGATION

by

Billy Max Condrey, Jr.

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Master of Philosophy

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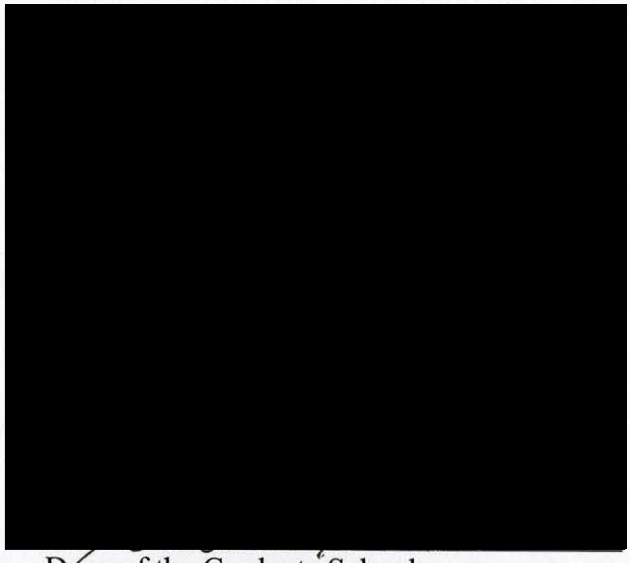

Dean of the Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

CHRISTIANITY, THE DUTY TO ASSIST OTHERS, AND SUPEREROGATION

by Billy Max Condrey, Jr.

August 2012

In 1958, J.O. Urmson's landmark article "Saints and Heroes" was the first in the history of philosophy to treat supererogation in a systematic manner. Arguing that the traditional threefold classification system consisting of *duties, permissible acts,* and *wrong acts* was insufficient, he went on to propose a fourth category of moral actions that while morally praiseworthy, are not obligatory. This in turn opened the door to a host of other philosophers to write on *supererogation* over the past few decades. In light of this, Christian ethicists must ask the question, "Are supererogatory actions possible in Christian ethics?" This question must be broken down into two questions to account for the central role God plays in Christian ethics. The first question is, "Is it possible for a Christian to perform a supererogatory deed toward God?" and the second question is, "Is it possible for a Christian to perform a supererogatory deed toward another person?" While it is not possible for a Christian to perform a supererogatory act toward God, it is possible toward another person. Thus, the task remains for Christian ethicists to search out in each specific area what in fact is a *duty* and what actions are *supererogatory*. The specific area chosen is the opportunity that American Christians of relative affluence have to give aid to rescue lives overseas.

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CHAPTER I

J.O. URMSON AND THE SUPEREROGATORY

In 1958, J.O. Urmson wrote a landmark article entitled, "Saints and Heroes." He introduced the idea that throughout the history of Western philosophy, moral theorists and their theories have something very significant in common. Whether Kant's *Deontological Ethics* or Mill's *Utilitarianism*, philosophers in the past have either implicitly or explicitly assumed a threefold classification of actions from the perspective of moral worth. Urmson's task is "to show the inadequacy of such a classification" (Urmson 199).

This chapter is divided into two sections: (I) present in detail J. O. Urmson's argument for the supererogatory; and (II) present an overview of various arguments found in the relevant literature for and against the supererogatory. The purpose in section II is not to argue one position or the other, but rather to educate the reader to the wide range of views pertaining to whether or not the supererogatory exists. Granted, it is impossible to cover all of the relevant material. With this in mind, arguments were selected with one of two criteria: (a) is commonly referred to by others in the field; or (b) the argument possesses a significant degree of ingenuity and force. This will serve as a conceptual foundation for answering Chapter II's central question, "Are supererogatory actions possible within Christian ethics?"

Section I

According to Urmson, the three types of moral actions accounted for in past moral theories are "duties, indifferent actions, and [actions of] wrongdoing" (215). *Duties* are those actions which are "obligatory…that we ought to perform" (198). Actions referred

to as *indifferent* are actions that are "permissible from a moral standpoint…but that are not morally required of us" (198). *Wrongdoing*, as the name implies, is the category reserved for actions that are "wrong, that we ought not to do" (198). He argues that this trichotomy fails to provide an adequate explanatory framework in that it lacks the ability to capture the full gamut of moral actions. In other words, there exist certain types of actions that are *moral* yet cannot be subsumed under one of these three categories. Therefore, there is a "need for a new taxonomy, a four-fold classification of the moral realm, which recognizes the existence of acts which attract moral praise but do not require emulation" (McGoldrick 523). This proposed fourth category of moral action is what is referred to as the "supererogatory" (Urmson 214).

In arguing for the supererogatory, Urmson begins by observing that there are times we call a person a *saint* or *hero* as well as times we label an action *saintly* or *heroic* (199). Urmson makes a distinction between these two terms that proves to be of minor consequence in light of his overall thesis. Yet for the purposes of understanding Urmson, it is a distinction worth highlighting. It is what these terms have in common that is most important. The distinction will best come to light in discussing the similarities.

One similarity is that in everyday conversation, people use both of these words in an evaluative sense. When an individual is called a "saint" or "hero" or his action "saintly" or "heroic", Urmson rightly assumes that "at least sometimes we use both words for moral evaluation" (199). There is no doubt that as with any word or phrase in any given language, people frequently use them in a sloppy fashion that does not fit into the stream of their actual meaning. This being said, most people do in fact use these words to bestow a favorable moral evaluation on a person or deed performed. For example,

pretend that a residential house catches fire and the mom and dad only have time to save three out of their four young children. At the last minute, a stranger with no prior knowledge or relational connection with this family overhears that there is still one more child in the burning house. At this moment, the stranger rushes in to save the child. The stranger makes it in, is able to retrieve the child, and makes it out alive carrying the child. The stranger's action was clearly heroic. Why? To start with, the stranger did not owe anything to this family. Secondly, the act was of an extreme, life-or-death nature. For the most part, humans have this intuitive idea that a person is not required to put this much on the line when it comes to aiding a complete stranger. In calling this stranger a *hero*, we undoubtedly bestow a positive evaluation upon the stranger in declaring him not just good, but *morally* good and thus worthy of *moral* praise.

Another similarity is the type of situations that these terms are most often used. This will serve as the best context to reveal the minor distinction Urmson makes between the saint and the hero. From a moral perspective, there are three types of situations in which these words, *saint* and *hero*, are utilized to morally praise someone. Two of the three situations refer to times when we call a person saintly or heroic because "he does his duty in such difficult contexts that most men would fail in them" (Urmson 201).

The first situation involves the person exercising an impressive level of self-control. In the case of the saint, he resists the "inclination, desire, or self-interest" (Urmson 200) that prevent most people from fulfilling their duty. In the case of the hero, he resists the "terror, fear, or drive to self-preservation" (200) that for everybody else usually serve to prevent one from doing one's duty. Urmson writes of this first situation, "…the unmarried daughter does the saintly deed of staying home to tend her ailing and

widowed father; the terrified doctor heroically stays by his patients in a plague-ridden city" (200).

The second situation parallels the first except for one major factor. In the first type of situation, the saint and the hero were labeled accordingly due to the fact that they were able to resist succumbing to the same psychological forces that prevented everyone else from performing that same moral duty. In this second type of situation, the *resistance factor* present in the first situation is removed. The person is performing the deed "without effort" (Urmson 200). It is an actual desire. It flows out of one's heart, out of who one is, and to not do the deed would result in a loss of happiness to the individual. Consider Urmson's *unmarried daughter* example in the first situation. In that example, her action is saintly if she stays at home with her father in the absence of any desire to do so. She does not want to do it, but exercises self-control in resisting her own desire and interest to leave. In the second type of situation, imagine that rather than exercising self-control, she actually desires to stay with her father more than anything else. In this case, she fulfills the same duty as in situation one except this time she does so *without effort*. Whereas in the first situation a person is fighting an uphill internal battle, in the second type of situation the saint/hero is acting out of a *desire.* It is no moral secret that it is much easier to do something that is in our heart to do as opposed to merely doing something because the other option is morally wrong. In both situations the saint or hero performs the deed that hardly anybody else is willing to do. Yet only in the second situation is the action performed "out of that which fills the heart" (*New American Standard Bible*, Matt. 12.28). However, what is important is that in both of these first two types of situations that the words *saint* and *hero* are used, Urmson is still speaking of

duties. The person is not a saint or hero because he goes beyond the call of duty, but rather because he does not avoid performing his duty when most other men and women would. Interestingly, Urmson goes on to call the saint or hero in these first two types of situations "minor" (201).

It is the third type of situation wherein these words are used that cannot be subsumed under the threefold classification. These are situations where one performs an action that goes "far beyond the limits of his duty" (Urmson 201). According to Urmson, this is the "hero or saint, heroic or saintly deed, par excellence" (201). However, this raises an interesting dilemma. Is it possible for an action in a certain situation to be morally good yet not obligatory? In other words, are there morally praiseworthy actions that extend "beyond the limits" (200) of duty so that one no longer has the moral obligation to perform them? Urmson also designates another type of action that "exceeds the basic demands of duty" (205). He writes, "It is possible to go just beyond one's duty" (205). He is essentially dividing the *supererogatory* into two subcategories that are distinguished only to the degree that they exceed the limits of duty (determining where to draw that line is not quite so simple). The two subcategories are as follows: (a) that which goes far beyond the limits of one's duty (the saintly or heroic), and (b) that which goes just beyond the limits of duty. The major point inherent in both is that it is possible for an action to be morally praiseworthy yet not obligatory.

The reason this dilemma is interesting is that the majority of people assume that if something is morally good and therefore praiseworthy to perform, then by all means, one has a duty to perform that action. Michael Clark captures this tension with the question, "How is it possible that there should be acts which are meritorious from a moral point of

view but which are nonetheless not morally required of us?" (23). Yet, this is exactly what Urmson is claiming. Urmson argues his position with two different examples, one involving *a soldier and live hand grenade* and the other, *St. Francis of Assisi.*

In the first example, a squad of soldiers is practicing throwing live hand grenades on the ground. In a horrible mishap, one of the live grenades slips from the hand of one of the soldiers and ends up on the ground close enough to the squad to kill them all. At this moment one of the soldiers throws himself on the live grenade thus saving his comrades by using his own body as a shield. To rule out certain objections, Urmson asks us to further imagine that this soldier has just joined the unit and is therefore not motivated by emotions that would be present if say his best friend was in the squad. With this qualification added, this act is "clearly an action having moral status" (Urmson 202). The question then becomes in this specific situation whether or not the soldier who gave up his life to save his squad would have committed a moral wrong if he had not sacrificed himself. The reason that this question is important is because under the threefold classification, to say that a particular action is morally praiseworthy is to say that one has a moral obligation to perform the action. After all, without the supererogatory the only type of action that is *morally praiseworthy* is a duty, and a duty is that which is wrong *not* to perform. Urmson points out that Mill's *Utilitarianism* as well as Kant's *Deontological Ethics* are forced into this corner. Being an action that no doubt possesses moral status, he proceeds to set forth three questions with the intention of showing that it is not possible to categorize the soldier's morally praiseworthy act as a duty. If Urmson is correct, then the inadequacy of the threefold classification is exposed thus revealing a

need for a new category that allows for an action to be *morally praiseworthy* yet not *obligatory.*

In his second example, he goes back in history several centuries to a most interesting Christian figure, *St. Francis of Assisi* (1181/82-1226). He was known to preach to the birds. On one occasion, some of his friends gathered around him to both commend and celebrate his preaching (Urmson 203-204). However, St. Francis of Assisi was not pleased with this praise because he was "full of self-reproach" (Urmson 203) for having failed up to that point in his life to have preached the birds. St. Francis considered preaching to the birds as a duty that he had failed to do in the past. However, it is also significant that there is no record of St. Francis ever condemning any other person for not preaching to his feathered friends (204). Urmson writes,

> Yet there is a world of difference between this failure to have preached hitherto to the birds and a case of straightforward breach of duty…Francis could without absurdity reproach himself for his failure to do his duty, but it would be quite ridiculous for anyone else to do so, as one could have done if he had failed to keep his vows. (204)

St. Francis's believed it was God's command to *him* to preach to the birds. This command can be contrasted with commands found in the Scriptures. For example, Jesus commanded in the Sermon on the Mount for a man not to lust for a woman in his heart, and if he did, he was guilty of committing adultery (Matt. 5.27-28). It doesn't take anything more than a quick glance at this passage to see that this command was meant for all people, especially those who claim to follow Christ. The universal scope of this command is easily contrasted with the individual nature of the command St. Francis

believed he had received from God. In Christianity, God reserves the right to ask specific things of a person besides that which is commanded for all of His people. The point Urmson is attempting to make is that St. Francis of Assisi's *preaching to the birds* was supererogatory in nature. Though morally praiseworthy, it was not on par with the duty to keep one's promise, tell the truth, or not to lust. Intuitively, most people understand that it is generally wrong to break a promise or lie. Though morally praiseworthy from a Christian vantage point, not even St. Francis of Assisi believed this feathered preaching to be a duty for all or else he would have more than likely reproached others for not doing so.

What follows from this is quite challenging. If there is no fourth category of moral actions (the *supererogatory*), then we are left with no alternative other than to assert that if the soldier had not fallen on the grenade, he would have been morally guilty. The reason for this is that the soldier's action is without doubt *morally praiseworthy* and that under the threefold classification scheme, the only category of action that possesses this characteristic is that of *duty*. To escape this conclusion, a moral explanatory framework is needed that allows for an action to be morally praiseworthy yet not obligatory. Only then would we have a classification system that allows for the soldier's act of falling on the grenade to be *morally praiseworthy* (even *ideal*) while at the same time avoiding the intuitively troublesome position of having to say that the soldier would have been deserving of moral blame if he had not. Without this fourth option, we are forced into conclusions that seem erroneous and even bothersome for most humans. Only with the postulation of this fourth category does the intuitive tension seem to be relaxed and the dilemma alluded to earlier rectified. For Urmson, the addition of the

supererogatory is not only obvious, but mandatory if every human action is to be rightly categorized.

Section II

Since Urmson's article, over the past few decades there have been a plethora of responses for and against the supererogatory. In this section, objections to the supererogatory as well as arguments in favor of Urmson's thesis will be presented. The purpose of this section is to provide a more in-depth analysis of the issue by looking into the nuts and bolts of various arguments on both sides of the fence.

Consider the first objection presented by Urmson himself. Acting with foresight, he identified a particular objection that loomed as a potential threat to his theory. The objection goes something like this: *When a saint or hero performs an allegedly supererogatory deed, the saint or hero in fact considers the deed as being nothing more than his duty. If he perceives it as a mere duty, then we must be wrong in classifying his action as going above and beyond the call of duty, that is, supererogatory. Therefore, this fourth category is not needed.*

The second objection is that if indeed it is asserted that a particular action is morally praiseworthy, it does not make sense to say that it is at the same time not required. Both Elizabeth Pybus and Susan Hale take this position. This second objection is divided into two parts because though both writers take the same general position, they do so for different reasons. Following these objections, I will present two arguments in favor of the supererogatory. First, Patricia McGoldrick's counters Pybus's view in the attempt to rescue the supererogatory from Pybus' attack. Second, Susan Wolf argues for the supererogatory from a very unique and interesting perspective. Following Wolf's

argument, Robert Adams calls into question whether or not Wolf is justified in her conclusion that the supererogatory is needed.

The first objection to the supererogatory is given by Urmson himself. Acting as his own critic, he writes that one can imagine a scenario where prior to the soldier throwing himself on the grenade, he either by thought or feeling perceived his act of sacrifice as a *duty*. He would therefore have reproached himself for committing a moral wrong if he had not done so. Therefore, as the argument goes, the soldier's act is not supererogatory because he actually viewed his act as a duty, nothing more. If the soldier is correct in classifying his action as a *duty*, then no fourth category is needed. After all, a duty is rightfully understood as that action which all people when faced with the same decision in a similar set of circumstances must perform or else be morally guilty. Urmson argues that though this appears to be the case, it is misleading. He draws a distinction between what subjectively appears at the time of action as a duty and that which is a duty regardless of one's subjectivity. The latter he refers to as a "rock-bottom" duty (Urmson 204). Urmson writes,

> He may reason as follows: in so far as that soldier had time to feel or think at all, he presumably felt that he ought to do that deed; he considered it the proper thing to do; he, if no one else, might have reproached himself for failing to do his duty if he had shirked the deed…I concede that he might regard himself as being obliged to act as he does. But if he were to survive the action only a modesty so excessive as to appear false could make him say, 'I only did my duty,' for we know, and he knows, that he has done more than duty requires…Subjectively, we

> may say, at the time of action, the deed presented itself as a duty, but it was not a duty. (203)

A subjective duty is that which is *perceived* by an individual to be morally binding upon himself. Yet, no matter how much force accompanies the aforementioned perception, it is specific to this individual alone. It cannot be generalized as a morally binding duty for all human beings. On the other hand, a rock-bottom duty is objective in nature. It is true for all people at all times who find themselves in a similar set of circumstances. Though the soldier might claim he felt it was his duty to throw himself on the grenade (if he didn't die and could be consulted afterwards), we must remember that just because somebody uses the word, duty, does not in fact mean that the term is being used correctly. For the soldier, it was supererogatory though he personally in the moment felt it was his duty. If Urmson would not have drawn the distinction between *subjective* and *rock-bottom* duties, this argument against his proposed *supererogatory* would have been insurmountable.

The above objection is one of the two aspects of our moral experience that Susan Hale calls to our attention in arguing against the supererogatory approximately 35 years after Urmson's seminal article. However, it is only part of her broader and more complex attack against this fourth category of moral classification. She writes, "…there are no supererogatory actions; rather, all actions which are morally good are morally required" (Hale 274). This view is shared by Elizabeth Pybus. Pybus writes, "Saying that something is a moral ideal is saying that it is something we have some obligation to pursue" (195). As alluded to earlier, both writers take different intellectual paths in arriving at this same conclusion. Beginning with Hale's argument, her attack against the

supererogatory is two-fold. First, she gives an account of where she believes the idea of the supererogatory mistakenly originates. Second, she sets forth two aspects of our common moral experience that she believes is evidence against the possibility of supererogation.

For Hale, the supererogatory is a mistaken notion resulting from a common misunderstanding in situations where we are forced to decide between two imperfect duties. In most of our moral decisions, there is a conflict between duties. All duties can be broken down into one of two kinds: *perfect and imperfect*. She writes, "Perfect duties, then, are duties prescribing particular actions, in contrast to imperfect duties prescribing adoption of particular ends…or moral ideals as guides for our actions" (Hale 275). Concerning the conflict between these duties, there are three different moral situations we can find ourselves in. First, there is the situation where a person must morally decide what to do when faced with the choice between two perfect duties (or more). The second situation is one in which we are faced with having to choose between a perfect duty and an imperfect duty. The third situation is one where two imperfect duties are in conflict.

A perfect duty entails a specific action whereas an imperfect duty entails a more general principle that we are to apply in a situation when making a moral decision. An imperfect duty does not prescribe a specific action, only a principle from which to decide what course of action is best from a moral perspective. According to Hale, when one finds oneself in the second type of situation, it is morally wrong to choose to perform an imperfect duty when it means leaving a perfect duty undone. The reason seems rather straightforward. It does not make any sense to forego a moral action one knows one must do for an action one feels inclined to do because it seems to be what is suggested by a

general moral principle. However, there are also situations where one must choose between two perfect duties as well as situations where one must choose between two imperfect duties.

Hale does not have an answer as to how to choose between two perfect duties (On her behalf, this is not the central focus of her paper). What is important in understanding her theory are the situations where a moral agent is faced with a must-choose scenario between two imperfect duties. She claims that it is here where the idea of the supererogatory originates. According to Hale, we most often call an action supererogatory when two criteria are met. The first criterion is that the action "instantiates one of two or more conflicting imperfect duties for the agent" (Hale 276). The second criterion is that the action "is the action which we, were we to have the same conflicting moral requirements as the agent, would believe the more onerous for ourselves" (276). She observes that the ordinary person usually opts for the easier duty when it is not morally wrong to do so. This is the case in a situation where two imperfect duties collide. Though one is more onerous, it is not binding. One imperfect duty does not acquire elite status over and above another imperfect duty merely because it requires more of a person. If the moral agent did neither imperfect duty, then he would be morally culpable. But in this third type of situation between two or more imperfect duties, one is not morally bound to take "the one less travelled by" (Robert Frost Web). As a matter of fact, a moral agent is guilt-free if he chooses the easier path every single time. On the other side of the coin, the saint or hero is the one who, though not required, chooses the more onerous action on a continual basis. Hale writes, "What tends to distinguish saints and heroes and the ordinary agent is that saints and heroes are more

likely to perform the more onerous (to ordinary agents) of their conflicting imperfect duties than are ordinary agents" (279). She speculates that because there are very few saints and heroes, we seldom observe someone consistently choosing the more difficult, imperfect duty. Therefore, when one does, ordinary agents have a strong tendency to classify that individual as going *the extra mile* or *beyond the call of duty*. Hale is claiming that it is here in this existential tension between two or more imperfect duties that the powerful impulse arises to suggest that the supererogatory must exist. It could even be the case that people are psychologically motivated to want such a thing as the *supererogatory* so that there is a potential way out from more burdensome, moral responsibilities. This seems in part to be why Pybus strongly rejects the supererogatory. Yet Hale stands her ground arguing that this powerful impulse must be resisted. In other words, it is not the case when choosing between two imperfect duties that the more onerous action undergoes a sudden transformation from *duty* to *supererogatory* merely because it is rarely performed or because it is chosen over and against the easier option that nonetheless is morally justified. Both are still to be classified as duties. This is where the concepts of *saint* and *hero* come into play. As noted above, the saint or hero is the person who continually chooses the more onerous duty though the much easier duty would have been sufficient from a moral perspective. For Hale, the concept of the supererogatory mistakenly arises out of the glorification of this more *onerous* nature of a select imperfect duty compared with its imperfect rival in any given moral situation.

Following her very insightful and thought-provoking account of the origin of the supererogatory, she goes on to articulate two aspects of our common moral practice that in her opinion strongly demonstrates why most actions deemed supererogatory are in fact

nothing more than a duty (albeit *imperfect*). This second half of her defense is significant because if one is not convinced by her first approach which involved subdividing *duties* into perfect and imperfect and drawing out the subsequent implications, all hope is not lost. This second approach is more practical in nature, calling every person and philosopher to simply reflect on one's common moral experience.

The first aspect Hale directs our focus too is that people commonly make excuses for not performing the supposed *supererogatory* act (273). She reminds the readers of her earlier characterization of the supererogatory act as nothing more than the more *onerous* imperfect duty. If she is correct, then it makes sense why people sometimes offer an excuse for not performing what is purported to be *supererogatory*. It is because people recognize, whether consciously or subconsciously, that in choosing to perform an imperfect duty, it indeed is a *duty*, not an act of supererogation that is left undone. Offering excuses would not be as common if indeed the deed left undone was *supererogatory*. Therefore, the moral agent feels compelled to provide a reason why he or she did not choose to perform the other imperfect duty. Hale claims this *excuse-giving practice* really only makes sense if in fact the excused action is in fact a duty rather than supererogatory. She seems to think that if everyone knew it was not a duty, then moral agents would not feel pressure to give an excuse. Therefore, because it is often the case that an excuse is given, this demonstrates that in fact it was a duty passed by in favor of another duty.

On the flip side, not only do people give excuses for imperfect duties left undone (for the sake of fulfilling another imperfect duty), Hale also points out that there are situations where a person gives an excuse defending the imperfect duty one did choose to

perform. In a hypothetical case, she asks the reader to imagine a situation with her and a blind neighbor. Without going into unnecessary detail, she points out that often we judge someone's excuse for doing one thing rather than another as *inadequate.* When this is the case, we are judging this person *morally guilty* on the grounds that his or her excuse was inadequate to justifiably explain why he or she chose to perform the one *imperfect* duty rather than the other. Hale's point is that if it is possible when faced with at least two imperfect duties to offer an inadequate excuse, does this not imply that the inadequately excused action must have been a duty (in this case, imperfect)?

The one problem I can see with this line of argument concerns people who are highly susceptible to personal criticism and lack of approval. It does not seem far-fetched to imagine a case where a person gives an excuse for an action not because she feels the excused action to be a duty, but simply because he or she does not like the idea of disappointing anyone. It could be that the moral agent knows that when choosing between two actions, it is inevitable that somebody or some group of people will be disappointed. If the agent deeply cares about both sides, the idea of disappointing either side might be so strong and unpleasant that no matter which action is chosen, an excuse will be forthcoming for reasons *psychological* in nature, not *moral.* Though Hale's argument is substantial, it is possible that by underestimating the psychological complexity of human nature, this first aspect is not as strong as evidence against the supererogatory as she would like.

The second aspect of our moral experience that Hale claims is purportedly incongruous with the hypothesized *supererogatory* is that, "…saints and heroes do not believe they are doing anything more than their duties when they perform supposedly

supererogatory actions" (279). As stated earlier, this piece of her argument is the same objection that Urmson introduced and responded to some 35 years before. She cites Philip Hallie's book, *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed.* In a nutshell, it is the story of a community called *Le Chambon.* This place served as one of the only refuges in France for those trying to escape Hitler's *Nazi* forces. Interview after interview, the citizens of Le Chambon who helped offer refuge at great risk to their own life responded, "How can you call us 'good'? We were doing what had to be done. Who else could help them?" (Hale 274). In other words, they believed they were only doing their duty. Hale points out here that under what she calls the "standard deontic classification" (she takes the fourfold classification that includes the supererogatory to be the "standard" theory of our day as opposed to the threefold classification), this community appears to be going above and beyond the call of duty (274). Yet, to assert this is to outright deny the citizens' claim that they were only doing their duty. Thus, the *standard deontic classification* scheme fails.

The first problem with Hale's argument is that I as well as many others I assume would strongly object to her claim that this community appears to be going above and beyond the call of duty. Pretending for a moment that supererogation in fact is possible, this by no means entails that most people would classify the actions of the community of Le Chambon as such. Pushing this to the side for now, another problem arises. Hale is granting too much authority to the response of the community. Granted, in this case the citizens are correct. They did only do their duty. However, the point is that just because a person or community claims to have only done their duty does not necessarily imply that their classification (untrained as it may be) is correct. One's classification of a deed

can be absolutely wrong no matter how noble the act. It seems as if Hale is suggesting that the possibility of supererogation would mistakenly lead people to classify the actions of Le Chambon as supererogatory rather than a duty. Her problem with this is that it would be out of sync with the community's own assessment. Though I think she is wrong, the much more significant objection is that just because we can think of an example where the possibility of supererogation might mislead one to an erroneous classification of a specific deed or set of deeds, this by no means implies that supererogation is not possible. Though Le Chambon classified their actions rightly, this by no means implies that they are error-proof. A person or group of people can be wrong when classifying actions. Hale's argument against the supererogatory seems to rest on the fact that if supererogation is possible, it would have led the majority of us to classify the actions of the citizens of Le Chambon as such. Besides being wrong, the more important point is that this is no reason to rule out a possible category. A person's self classification of an action performed could be wrong, so just because the possibility of the supererogatory might mislead one at times when classifying certain actions, this says nothing as to whether or not this fourth category is actually possible. That is an entirely different issue. After all, do we rule out the categories of *duty* or *wrongdoing* just because some people sometimes get it wrong? Of course not. It is true that the possibility of supererogation in this case will probably mislead many in their assessment of this community's actions, but this has nothing to do with whether or not this category exists. Hale confuses our human capacity for error as somewhat of a metaphysical argument against supererogation (granted, I use metaphysical in a loose sense considering I am discussing categories rather than material objects).

What is even more troublesome is that Hale does not address the subjective-objective distinction that Urmson drew between different types of duties more than three decades before she wrote her article. She writes, "…saints and heroes do not believe they are doing anything more than their duties when they perform supposedly supererogatory actions" (Hale 279). One can see the connection between this statement and her above *Le Chambon* example. As stated, though the citizens in Le Chambon were right in their duty classification, this does not imply categorically they could never be wrong. It is easy to imagine situations where if a few details were tweaked, their actions might have been supererogatory. Thus, if they still would have held to their view that their actions were a duty, then they would have been wrong. The point is that just because *saints and heroes do not believe they are doing anything more than their duties when they perform supposedly supererogatory actions,* it is clear that there are cases where the subjective/objective duty distinction is crucial in making sense of certain moral situations. Saints and heroes often believe they are doing their duty and might even blame themselves if they did not. Yet, this only counts as evidence against the supererogatory if one fails to take into consideration the subjective/objective distinction drawn by Urmson. As Urmson points out,

> Such actions do not present themselves as optional to the agent when he is deliberating; but, since he alone can call such an action of his a duty, and then only from the deliberative viewpoint, only for himself and not for others, and not even for himself as a piece of objective reporting, and since nobody else can call on him to perform such an act as they can call on him to tell the truth and to keep

> his promises, there is here a most important difference from the rock-bottom duties which are duties for all and from every point of view… (204)

This distinction undermines the claim that *the supererogatory can't exist because saints and heroes view their actions as a duty.*

Overall, Susan Hale's attack is well thought out and rather persuasive, especially in regards to the two aspects of our practical moral experience she calls attention to. That being said, there are definitely some places in her argument are susceptible to attack. As stated earlier, Elizabeth Pybus also arrives at the same conclusion, namely that to say something is morally praiseworthy is to say it is therefore a moral duty. However, she arrives at this same conclusion that the supererogatory does not exist for different reasons.

At first glance, Pybus' argument possesses both a rational and intuitive appeal. In her article, "Saints and Heroes," she declares that the supererogatory does not exist as a moral category and that all of the actions that Urmson supposes fall into this fourth category are in reality moral duties.

To start with, she agrees with Urmson that when we endorse someone's behavior as saintly or heroic, this is indeed a *moral* endorsement. However, this is the only point in which she agrees with Urmson. With this shared assumption as her foundation, she writes, "I would suggest that if my commendation [of the particular act] is genuinely moral, then my genuine act of commendation does commit me to saying that this really is how man ought to be" (Pybus 194). Her next step is easy to detect. Once she introduces the word "ought" into the definition of what in her opinion it means to commend a certain act as *moral*, she now has enough in the bag to make her next claim. She writes, "But if I

do have a genuine *moral* view that this is how people ought to be, then I must think that I, and others, ought to live up to this, and regard those who do not as falling short of the moral standard" (194). From her perspective, you cannot classify an action or type of person as *morally praiseworthy* or as a *moral ideal* and yet in the same breath classify either as optional. Michael Clark beautifully captures this sharp tension between Urmson's view and Pybus' when he wrote, "Any adequate account of supererogatory acts should explain what gives a man the moral right to refrain from them; and it should also explain why it is none the less virtuous to perform those acts" (29). For Pybus, anything *moral* is thus binding for all humans in a similar situation. She writes,

> ...in morally praising the saint and the hero, we are committing ourselves to saying that this is how we, and other people, ought to be. The saint or hero is realizing the worthwhile through his actions. To say that someone is a saint or hero without believing we ought to be like him is not to express a moral judgment. (Pybus 196)

It is worth noting that Pybus shifts the focus from the actual act to the dispositions/virtues lying behind the act. In other words, every moral agent is not bound to necessarily do what the saint or hero does. Rather, if we are to truly consider the saint or hero as a *moral ideal*, then we are thereby committed to developing the dispositions or virtues that lie behind those actions we morally praise as *saintly* or *heroic*. Yet even with this shift of focus, the basic idea is the same, that there is no such thing as a morally praiseworthy act being *above and beyond the call of duty*.

Here we are brought back to Kant. In arguing that past systematic accounts of morality have not created a niche for the supererogatory, Urmson wrote of Kant,

"...beyond the counsels of prudence and the rules of skill, there is only the categorical imperative of duty, and every duty is equally and utterly binding on all men..." (206). This is a rather straight forward view that if an act is morally praiseworthy, it is a duty for every single person. Because Urmson denies this, Pybus goes as far as to accuse him of "unnecessarily lowering the concept of duty", exchanging a "morality of duty" with a "morality of aspirations" (195). She believes people are deceived when they believe that it is possible to call an action *morally good* and yet not feel obliged to perform the deed or develop the corresponding virtue. Summing up Pybus' theory: *When calling someone a saint or hero, either their act really is moral and thus we are obligated to perform it (if in similar situation), or, we are mistaken in our judging that person or act as moral and therefore the particular action does not fall under the heading of duty and thus is not binding.* Either it is morally praiseworthy and thus binding or else it is not and thus not binding. For Pybus, there is no middle ground.

According to Pybus, when we use the term *moral* we are in every case implying an ought. If one thinks of moral duties such as *telling the truth* or *keeping a promise*, her theory rings true. Or if one considers moral wrongs such as *rape* or *killing someone for pure pleasure*, then one has no problem saying that this moral evaluation requires that all humans everywhere are to refrain from such actions. On the surface, it does seem that most often when humans label something *morally praiseworthy* or *morally blameworthy*, there is either an *ought* or *ought not* implied. But what about the more complicated examples that are not so common? Is Pybus really prepared to argue that because the soldier's act of throwing himself on the grenade was morally praiseworthy that it was in fact his duty and that he could have been held morally responsible for not doing so? She

would have to answer, "Yes", if she is to remain consistent. This is a radically counter-intuitive position that almost any person would have difficulty accepting. Granted, there can be at times a moral obligation to make significant sacrifices for another. However, a theory that requires a person to give his life for another the first time the opportunity arises simply because it would be morally praiseworthy seems untenable. Though this criticism alone is of major consequence, there is still yet another objection.

Patricia McGoldrick points out this weakness with Pybus' view, namely that, she commits a *petitio principii.* Patricia McGoldrick writes,

> If we argue that any ideal to which we ascribe moral praise is one to which we all ought as a matter of duty to aspire, then we beg the question…That is to say, we may argue that moral commendation of an ideal logically entails that we ought as a matter of duty aspire to it if, and only if, we presuppose that all morally praiseworthy ideals are ideals of duty. But this is precisely the issue at stake, and thus just what cannot be presupposed. (524)

For McGoldrick, it is clear that ideals labeled as *supererogatory* are worthy goals toward which an individual might aspire. This being said, she does not agree that these ideals are worth aspiring to "as a matter of duty" (525). In other words, Pybus argues in a circle when she writes that any moral ideal is binding on us or else it would not be moral. This, after all, is what is being debated in the first place. You cannot assume the position you are supposedly defending. Whereas Urmson backs up his view with the *grenade* and *St. Francis of Assisi* examples, Pybus' defense of the tripartite classification scheme consists of nothing more than asserting if an act is morally praiseworthy or a certain disposition/virtue a moral ideal, it is therefore morally binding and is a duty. The

problem is that this is the very conclusion she set out to defend in the beginning. Granted, her paper is beneficial from an academic vantage point in that it explains well what one must believe if one holds to the classic, tripartite classification theory. However, a summary does not seem to be what she intended and for this reason, fails.

Having brought light to the weakness in Pybus' approach, McGoldrick goes on to argue that if one is to get anywhere in this debate, one must argue from an independent position so that whatever conclusion we come to is not "presumptive of either schema" (525). Though Pybus' argument is at risk of begging the question, it is worth mentioning that Urmson's argument may not fare much better. Granted, Urmson's grenade example is powerful, but upon closer inspection, Urmson may also be guilty of begging the question. Whether or not one thinks this criticism of Urmson is fair, it does seem that McGoldrick's recommendation for an independent starting point is clever. She writes that the distinguishing feature of a supererogatory act is that "it is performed at extreme risk to one's own life and well-being" (McGoldrick 525). In arguing for the supererogatory, she must in light of her definition answer the question, "Why can't a moral action *performed at extreme risk to one's own life and well being* be required?" This question must be answered because there are in fact examples such as a firefighter rescuing a child in a fire that could very well be classified as an obligation stemming from what he agreed too.

To answer the question, she turns to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. She writes of Kant's ethics that we have a duty to "recognize and respect the intrinsic worth or value of human beings" (McGoldrick 526). The phrase, human beings, includes one's own self. To recognize and respect the intrinsic value for all people excluding one's own

self would be a direct violation of Kant's ethics as well as in most other ethical systems. After all, to not respect the value of my own life is to neglect to do so for at least one human being, namely myself. This is extremely important because if the soldier must respect every other person's intrinsic value except his own, then it is difficult to see how the act of throwing himself on the grenade would not be an outright duty for him. Yet, if his self-worth is on par with every other human being (in this case all of the other soldiers in his group), then it is hard to see how one could argue that it is still his duty to give his valuable life for another valuable life. It would be nothing more than a tradeoff. McGoldrick writes,

> Now, a man who persistently and continually allows others, and indeed believes that he *ought* to allow others, to abuse him, to use him as a means to their own ends, or to demand that he consistently sacrifice his own aspirations, goals, and interests to theirs, fails to recognize this [the intrinsic worth of oneself]. He abrogates his own self-worth, fails to respect the intrinsic value of at least one human being, namely himself... (526)

If one chooses to do so, that is his moral choice. But to say it is his duty is tantamount to asserting that that person's life is not as valuable as his comrades. However, under a fourfold classification system, this erroneous conclusion is circumvented. All human beings are equally valuable, so if the soldier wants to give his life, he can, and if he does not, then he does not have too. The proposed fourth category of supererogation offers a philosophical escape from this dilemma.

This argument poses a significant obstacle that anybody such as Pybus must take into consideration when arguing against the supererogatory. For Pybus or any other to

counter such an argument, he or she must step outside her trichotomous taxonomy onto independent grounds. She would have to show how those acts done at an *extreme risk to one's own life and well being* could be classified as a duty on par with such duties as *telling the truth* or *not stealing*. It is difficult to see how one might do this. This is not to say that every moral action involving extreme risk to one's self is never a duty as in the case of a firefighter, but that more often than not, these type of acts take on a supererogatory nature. This is in line with what Urmson argued. It should come as no surprise considering McGoldrick agrees with Urmson's overall thesis that the supererogatory classification is needed. The fourfold classificatory system for moral actions is hands down a much better fit in capturing the full range of our moral experiences once more complex moral situations such as the *grenade* example are considered.

Susan Wolf presents a unique defense for the supererogatory. Rather than dealing directly with whether the threefold classification system of moral actions is sufficient, she examines the notion of a moral saint and concludes that it ought to be rejected because it "does not constitute a model of personal well-being" (419). Based on this claim, she insists that past moral theories be revised and future moral theories "make use of some conception of supererogation" (438).

She defines a saint as "a person whose every action is as morally good as possible, a person, that is, who is as morally worthy as can be" (419). The first reason that all humans should *not* be morally obligated to pursue this ideal moral status is that it could only be achieved at the cost of one's own well-being. Every human being has resource-limitations; whether it be time, money, emotion, or physical energy, there are

limits to how much a person can spend in a given day, week, or over the course of a lifetime. If a person devotes oneself solely to such saintly moral activity, that person risks one's well-being. Wolf equates personal well-being with having space and time in one's life to pursue "non-moral virtues" such as "reading Victorian novels, playing the oboe, or improving [one's] backhand" (421). She concludes that a moral saint cannot justify committing any of the aforementioned resources toward the enjoyment or development of anything not considered overtly moral. As she puts it, "…one might naturally begin to wonder whether the moral saint isn't, after all, too good – if not too good for his own good, at least too good for his own well-being" (421). Wolf places such a high value on a person both developing and eventually attaining a "healthy, well-rounded, richly developed character" (421), that she scorns moral sainthood. To put it differently, you cannot save the world and still have the time to commit towards becoming a great athlete or renown musician. She later extends her criticism to a life dominated by any "extraordinarily dominant concern" (422). The basic idea is that any single concern that dominates the totality of one's life will inevitably prevent one from experiencing all that life has to offer. Wolf argues that, of all potential single concerns, moral sainthood poses a greater danger than any other. This is because for some reason, this particular type of concern tends to be more consuming than any other.

Her second reason for rejecting the idea that every human being should strive to be a saint or hero is that it would result in every person being so "very, very nice" that he or she would have to be "dull-witted or humorless or bland" in the attempt not to offend anyone (422). Surely this would be a grave disappointment due to the color and charm these qualities introduce into life.

Wolf is not arguing that the actions performed by moral saints are in fact *not* morally good. She is merely pointing out that when it comes to how good it would be for a person to act from a moral point of view, the answer is not "as much as possible" (437). This position allows for humans to pursue non-moral virtues without having to feel guilty for doing so. At first glance, it is difficult to see how her argument against the attractiveness of a moral saint translates to a need for the supererogatory. Yet upon closer inspection, the link becomes clear. If every action and/or lifestyle that is morally good or morally praiseworthy is at the same time required, then a person would be morally guilty for reading a Victorian novel or practicing tennis in their downtime. Pursuing any of these personal, non-moral interests would result in less moral good being done due to the resource-limitations all humans are subject too. Under the threefold classification system that Urmson argues is insufficient, every morally good or morally praiseworthy course of action is a rock-bottom duty that one is obligated to carry out. There is no conceptual room for something to be morally good yet not obligatory. This is why Urmson argues for a fourth category. Without this fourth category of supererogation, Wolf's well-rounded person who chooses to pass up morally good actions in order to become well-rounded would be morally guilty for doing so. After all, the resources spent on becoming well-rounded are time and energy not spent doing that which is *clearly* of moral value. Only with the fourfold classificatory system for human action is there theoretical space for a person to forego an action which is morally praiseworthy for the simple reason that only with the supererogatory is there the moral freedom to pass on certain actions that while morally good, are not obligatory. If every morally praiseworthy action is required as under the threefold classification scheme, then

it is morally wrong for you to play tennis when you could be going to the local homeless shelter to serve once yet again. Wolf needs the supererogatory for a person to have the freedom to develop one's *entire* self rather than just one's *moral* self.

Robert Adams, however, attacks some of Wolf's central presuppositions she uses to defend the supererogatory. Adams doesn't seem to be arguing against the supererogatory, but he does argue against the need for the supererogatory based on Wolf's line of thinking.

Adams first attacks her picture of sainthood. He accuses Wolf of committing a fundamental error by painting such an "unattractive …picture of moral sainthood" (Adams 393). He writes, "The idea that only a morally imperfect person would spend half an hour doing something morally indifferent, like taking a nap, when she could have done something morally praiseworthy instead…is at odds with our usual judgments and ought not to be assumed at the outset" (393). He uses Albert Schweitzer as an example. Schweitzer in the midst of all his humanitarian commitments in Africa made sure to have a piano he could spend time playing for his personal pleasure. Granted, he went on to use his piano skills to raise money for his cause, but this wasn't the reason he initially kept a piano and devoted time to it. As Adams points out, it was simply for the satisfaction Schweitzer experienced when playing.

Anybody that has ever devoted a large part of time to helping other people has felt the desperate need to step back at moments and spend some personal time getting refreshed and refueled so as to avoid burnout. Whether this is playing video games, reading a book, playing golf, or simply hanging out with friends, who would argue that these activities would make one less *moral*? The time set aside for non-moral virtues is

sometimes the very thing that enables a person to wholeheartedly devote themselves to a saint-like lifestyle over the long-haul as opposed to just a short-term commitment.

Adams goes on to argue that "sainthood is essentially a religious phenomenon" (395) and that religion is much "richer than morality" (400). When we gain a proper, more comprehensive religious understanding of the "breadth of the Creator's interests" (400), a conception of sainthood that allows room for aesthetic, intellectual, or athletic amoral pursuits is now fully justified due to the fact that God is a "lover of beauty" (400) as well a lover of joy, laughter, relationships, personal growth, and fun as well as activity traditionally labeled, moral. Do we not see in the lives of past saints this idea that "All things are spiritual?" How else could Brother Lawrence be justified in claiming that he learned to practice the presence of God (the title of his book) as he washed dishes in the kitchen?

Another significant point Adams makes against Wolf is that such saintly characters as Gandhi and Jesus often offended others for telling people the truth. This is in stark contrast to Wolf's description of a saint when she wrote, "It is important that he not be offensive" (422). In the case of either one of these figures, being a saint never required a superficial politeness over and above the need at times to speak truth. Neither did it require either to be *bland.* Has Wolf not read the book of John where the first miracle of Christ was to turn water into the best kind of wine at a wedding feast? I doubt those drinking that wine would have used the word, bland, to describe Christ on that day! Only in early Renaissance paintings such as Fra Angelico's *Christ Carrying the Cross* or Giotto's *The Last Judgement* do we get a portrait of a pale, bland, lifeless Jesus. These

paintings do not capture the passionate Christ in the Gospels who wept, healed, turned over tables, and forgave even while hanging on a cross.

Susan Wolf's argument for the supererogatory succeeds only if her characterization of sainthood is accurate. If Adams is right, then Wolf's characterization of sainthood fails, which weakens her argument. If Wolf's argument fails, then her argument for the supererogatory crumbles as well.

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce J.O. Urmson's fourth classificatory category of moral actions, *the supererogatory*, and secondly, to present an overview of various arguments found in the relevant literature for and against the supererogatory. Though there will always be difficulties in and objections to any theory, the scale seems to tip largely in favor of a fourfold moral classificatory schema of human action. The question we are faced with is, "Which moral taxonomy, the threefold or fourfold classificatory system, fits best with our human experience, intuition, and reason, and presents the least amount of difficulty in terms of defending such a view?" From both the philosopher's armchair and the beliefs inherent in everyday discourse among people, the supererogatory appears crucial if we are to be able to accurately classify the full range of human actions.

CHAPTER II

ARE SUPEREROGATORY ACTIONS POSSIBLE IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS?

Having presented the nature of the debate regarding the supererogatory category for moral actions in chapter one, the central question of this chapter is, "Are supererogatory actions possible within Christian ethics?" In this chapter, I will argue that supererogatory acts are possible within Christian ethics. That is, Christian ethicists should acknowledge that it is possible to perform actions that are morally praiseworthy yet not obligatory. Different branches of the church in the past have disagreed sharply over this issue. However, part of the confusion and disagreement in church history stems from the failure to treat this question in its entirety. In Christian ethics, it is impossible to avoid a superficial treatment of this question if one does not first stop and break this question down into its two counterparts. The first of these two is, "Is it possible for a person to perform a supererogatory action toward God?" I will answer this question in section I. The second of the two is, "Is it possible to perform a supererogatory action toward another person?" This division is not necessary in non-religious ethical systems such as Aristotle's *Virtue Ethics*, Kant's *Deontological Ethics*, or Mill's *Utilitarianism*. This is because in all three secular systems, God does not play a prominent role and therefore, all moral questions are questions dealing solely with a person's relationship with other people. In any one of these three systems, only the second of the two questions concerning the supererogatory is relevant.

The existence and centrality of God in Christianity is of the utmost significance. It requires every question asked to be asked in two directions: *in relation to God as well as in relation to other humans.* Oliver Johnson and Andrews Reath write,

> Most religious outlooks include or support a moral code in the narrow sense of a body of principles that govern how one should regard and treat others. The moral code of a religion may also have implications for a person's attitudes toward God, nature, and so on. But many religious duties do not in and of themselves seem to be moral duties – for example, duties to engage in certain religious practices or rituals, or to engage in certain specific forms of worship. Of course, this is a complicated issue. Religious practices may take on a moral dimension within the broader context of a religious outlook. For example, if one believes in God and, because of the relationship between God and humankind, believes that one has duties of worship that are moral in nature, one may think that the practices of one's religion are morally obligatory. The duty to worship God may entail that one is morally bound to follow these religious practices. (3-4)

Consider the issue of worship within the context of Christian ethics. It is a moral obligation for every Christian to worship God. Granted, hopefully this duty becomes much more than that at some point, but at a base level, it is nevertheless a duty. However, though a Christian has a duty to worship God, a Christian would be committing a moral wrong if he or she worshiped another human being. The point is that with any given issue, a Christian's duty to God and duty to others can differ. Therefore, in the realm of Christian ethics, ethicists must take into account both directions if one hopes to arrive at complete answers.

Throughout these two sections, the answers given by the Catholic Church as well as the United Methodist Church on this issue will be scrutinized, including the views of John Wesley and Thomas Aquinas. Relevant portions of the New Testament will also be

examined because the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, are central to any intellectual investigation concerning what a Christian should do or think. Furthermore, various philosophers relevant to these two questions will also be considered.

Section I

Within Christian ethics, is it possible for a person to perform a supererogatory action toward God? I will defend the view that it is not possible for a Christian to perform an action for or toward God that is both *morally praiseworthy* yet *not obligatory*. In defense of this position, I will begin with the verse Luke 17:10. Next, I will examine Thomas Aquinas' position for the supererogatory as well as John Wesley's position against the supererogatory. Following this, the issue of celibacy will be addressed. The reason for selecting this particular issue is because amidst the various issues in the New Testament, *celibacy* more than any other issue has the potential to be a *supererogatory act toward God.* To conclude this section, I will turn to the writings of George Hubbard and make a few final comments on how the element of sacrifice in the New Testament suggests that it is not possible to perform an act of supererogation toward God.

In Luke 17:10, Jesus says, "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done'". The original language that the New Testament was written in is *Koine Greek.* One thing that is significant in this particular passage is the Greek word for *duty*. The word is "opheilo", meaning "*to owe* (pecuniarily); figuratively, to *be under obligation (ought, must, should)*; morally to fail in duty" (Strong G3784). At first glance, the usage of this word appears to be specifically *financial* in nature. However, as is not uncommon, the word possesses a much broader, general meaning that though

conceptually similar, is detached from the specific category of finances. This is further demonstrated by a quick glance at the other 35 times this Greek word occurs in the New Testament. Of those 35, eight instances are clearly in reference to money, three are somewhat ambiguous, and the remaining 25 are clearly *not* referring to financial matters. This means that out of 36 occurrences, nearly 70% is in reference to an obligation that is *not* pecuniary in nature. For instance, after washing the feet of His disciples the night before He was crucified, Jesus spoke, "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought [*opheilo*] also to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). In Romans 15:1, Paul wrote, "Now we who are strong ought [*opheilo*] to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just to please ourselves." Furthermore, toward the end of the New Testament, Christians receive the instruction "...the one who says he abides in Him ought [*opheilo*] himself to walk in the same manner as He [Jesus] walked" (1 John *2:6*). The use of this word is strategic. Though an exhortation does not necessarily imply obligation, it does in this context due to the fact that these exhortations were framed with a word whose definition entails that a Christian fails morally in leaving them undone.

Earlier I provided a working definition of supererogatory: *actions that are morally praiseworthy yet not obligatory*. This working definition implies that *duty* is to be understood as that type of action that is both *morally praiseworthy* and as Urmson writes, "obligatory, or that [which] we ought to perform..." (198). The word *opheilo* captures this while also introducing the additional notion that a moral duty is a moral debt that one is obligated to pay. Not to pay one's debt, whether pecuniary or moral, is wrong (in Christianity, a *sin*). With this in mind, our working definition of *supererogation* needs to be slightly adjusted to accommodate the additional element that the Greek

introduces. Piecing it all together, a supererogatory act in Christian ethics is that type of action that though morally praiseworthy, is not at the same time a moral debt one is obligated to pay. Interestingly, the Latin etymology of *supererogation* is "paying out more than is due," and first appears in Jesus' parable *The Good Samaritan* in the Latin version of the New Testament (Heyd).

Because the Greek word for *duty* includes the additional notion of a *moral debt one is obligated to pay* (that is, owes), Christian ethicists must take this into consideration when asking, "Is it possible for a person to perform a supererogatory action toward God?" Taking into account our slight adjustment based on the Greek text, what is really being asked is whether or not it is possible for a Christian to pay out more than he or she owes God. It does not seem too extraordinary the idea that a Christian could pay out more than he owes another person. However, I reject the idea that a person could pay out more than he owes God. This is quite possibly what Wesley and the Methodists had in mind when they claimed that acts of supererogation could not "be taught without arrogance and impiety" (The Articles of Religion). Before delving into their position, I turn to the writings of Thomas Aquinas.

Thomas Aquinas is best known for his book *Summa Theologica*. In it, there are two places where he deals with the issue of supererogation. He fully endorses the idea that acts of supererogation are possible in Christian ethics. The Catholic Church in the past has used his writings to support their view in favor of the supererogatory. It is to his credit that though he never specified the need to treat the question of *supererogation* as two different questions, this is nonetheless exactly what he did. In the first instance, he treats the issue as it relates to a person toward God. In the second instance, he treats the

issue as it relates to a person toward another person. The second instance belongs in the second section in this chapter and therefore will be left aside for now.

The first time Aquinas discusses supererogation is located under the heading, "Whether the New Law Fulfills the Old" (Part I-II, Question 107, Art. 2, 666). He writes, "Now Christ fulfilled the precepts of the Old Law both in His works and in His doctrine…In His doctrine He fulfilled the precepts of the Law in three ways" (667). It is in the third way that Aquinas suggests Christ fulfilled the precepts of the law that the supererogatory is first introduced. He writes,

> Our Lord fulfilled the precepts of the Law, by adding some counsels of perfection: this is clearly seen in Matt. 19:21, where Our Lord said to the man who affirmed that he had kept all the precepts of the Old Law: "One thing is wanting to thee: If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell whatsoever thou hast." (667)

The verse Aquinas references is from the passage in Matthew 19:16-22, Mark 10:17-22, and Luke 18:18-23. Aquinas seems to focus in more on the Matthew version than the others which proves to be significant. In this story, a wealthy young man comes to Jesus and asks the question, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" (Matt. 19:16). Jesus ends His response by telling him that he must keep the commandments. Upon this instruction, the young man responds, "Which ones?" Jesus names six, five of which are found in the Ten Commandments that had been given to Moses in the gestation period of the Israelite nation (Exodus 20:1-17). The young man proceeds to tell Jesus that he had kept all six mentioned since his youth. Then, as Aquinas quoted, Jesus responds, "If you wish to be complete, go *and* sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow

Me" (Matthew 19:21). The story tragically ends with the young man opting not to follow Christ.

The six commandments that Jesus gave the young man are what Aquinas labels *precepts of the Law*. He draws a sharp distinction between these and the invitation from Jesus at the end of the story, "If you wish to be complete…" (Matt. 19:21). Aquinas views this invitation *to sell all and give to the poor* as a *counsel of perfection*. Whereas *precepts of the Law* are mandatory for everyone, *counsels of perfection* are for those who by their own choice desire to do more than what is required. Arthur Barnes sums it up nicely when he writes,

> He [Jesus] also taught certain principles which He expressly stated were not to be considered as binding upon all, or as necessary conditions without which heaven could not be attained, but rather as counsels for those who desired to do more than the minimum and to aim at Christian perfection… (The Catholic Encyclopedia)

The basic idea is that for those who want to be a good Christian, one must follow the *precepts of the Law*. But if one desires to be *perfect* in one's faith, one can choose to accept those *counsels of perfection* taught by Christ. It is here in verse 21 that Aquinas supposedly finds a distinction between *duty* and *acts of supererogation*.

I suggest that Aquinas misinterpreted this passage. If correct, then his Biblical defense for acts of supererogation toward God comes up short.

First of all, Jesus was not drawing a distinction as much as he was pointing out to this man who/what his god really was. It was money. His trust was in his own wealth and therefore Jesus gave him the individual *command* to sell everything and give it all to

the poor. Jesus saw his heart and knew that if he was going to truly follow Him and make Him *Lord*, all other rulers of the man's heart had to be renounced.

Secondly, that Aquinas is not justified in using this passage as an argument for *supererogation* is made even clearer by calling to mind the story of Zacchaeus. This is crucial because this is the sole place that Aquinas rests his argument for the supererogatory from the perspective of a person toward God. In Luke 19:1-10, Zacchaeus tells Jesus that he will sell half of all his wealth and give to the poor. Following this statement, Jesus responds "Today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9). Recalling the famous words of Christ in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life," there is a clear link in the New Testament between *salvation* and *inheriting eternal life*. It could even be argued that they are synonyms. Thus, it is possible that Jesus could be interpreted in Luke 19:9 as telling Zacchaeus, "Today you have *inherited eternal life."* As an expression of his newfound faith in Christ, he told Jesus he was going to give half of what he had to the poor. Jesus was completely satisfied with this offer and did not raise him from *half* to *all*. Though selling and giving all to the poor was not required of every person who desired to inherent eternal life, for the rich young ruler, it was. As John Wesley writes of the rich young man, "To him therefore he [Jesus] gave this particular direction, which he never designed for a general rule. For him that was necessary to salvation: to us it is not. To sell all was an absolute duty to him…" (John Wesley's Notes on the Bible) It is possible that the reason that Jesus did not tell Zacchaeus to sell everything was because his "character [was] free from the love of money" (Hebrews 13:5). In contrast, it appears that Jesus did see this idol in

the heart of the rich young ruler and knew that if he didn't renounce it all now, he would end up walking away from him (Jesus) in the future anyway. So for the rich young man, it was not optional. He would not inherit eternal life if he did not sell all and give it to the poor. Besides, if giving all to the poor was in fact *supererogatory* (a *counsel of perfection)*, then why did Jesus not give the rich young ruler the "half-option" that was smiled upon in the case of Zacchaeus? It does not make sense that Jesus would let a man walk away from Him only because He was not willing to go the *extra* mile having already fulfilled his spiritually moral obligations. However, it does make sense that Jesus would let the rich young man walk away if in fact selling all and giving to the poor was an obligatory duty he was refusing to pay.

I suspect this would be an example as to why Susan Wolf argues *sainthood is unattractive*. For this rich young ruler, he would have lost everything and from that point on, would have been unable with the loss of wealth to pursue personal pleasures, hobbies, skills, and/or activities that people are accustomed to pursuing when wealthy. Had he taken the step, this would definitely have been a step in the wrong direction if becoming more well-rounded in Wolf's sense is to serve as the premier human aspiration.

Three of the four Gospels that include this story paint the picture that this rich young ruler was being invited by Christ to fulfill the law, not go beyond it. Matthew records Jesus as saying, "If you wish to be complete" (Matt.19.21). Mark records Jesus as saying, "One thing you lack" (Mark 10.21), while Luke records Jesus as saying, "One thing you still lack" (Luke 18.22). I suggest that the idea of *lacking* does not fit well with Aquinas' interpretation of the passage. To say someone is *lacking* in something implies that one is not yet complete. All three passages seem to point in this direction. Even

more convincing is what these words actually mean in the original Greek. The word, complete, that Matthew records Jesus speaking is the word, teleious. *Teleious* means, "*complete* (in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character, etc.); neuter (as noun, with G3588) *completeness:* - of full age, man, perfect" (Strong, Greek #5046). For the word *lack*, Mark uses the word "hustereõ", meaning "to *be later*, that is, (by implication) to *be inferior*; genitively to *fall short* (*be deficient*): - come behind (short), be destitute, fall, lack, suffer need, (be in) want, be the worse" (Strong, Greek #5302). Luke uses the Greek word, leipõ. *Leipõ* means, "to *leave*, that is, (intransitive or passive) to *fail* or *be absent:* - be destitute (wanting), lack" (Strong, Greek #3007). Matthew describes Jesus inviting this man to do that which will make him complete in his observance of the law. According to Mark and Luke's word for *lack*, it seems safe to draw the conclusion that Jesus was telling this rich young man that his observance of the Law was incomplete. This appears to be in stark contrast to Aquinas' claim that this was an invitation to the young man to go above and beyond the *precepts of the Law*. The picture Aquinas paints is one of Jesus telling the rich young ruler that he had fulfilled all his duties and that if he wanted to go above and beyond the moral debt that he had owed and paid, then he could sell everything and give to the poor. This would be a supererogatory act toward God. Yet, all three Greek words utilized by these three authors point in another direction entirely. The rich young ruler was not complete. He could not take the step that Jesus told him to take. As stated earlier, why would Jesus have let this man walk away from Him if this was merely a *counsel of perfection* rather than a *precept of the Law*? If Jesus had viewed his instruction to the young man to sell all and give to the poor as supererogatory, then would Jesus not have encouraged him to follow anyway

since at least the young man had fulfilled the precepts of the Law? But Jesus did not do this. He let him walk away. This in my opinion is the strongest piece of evidence in support of the idea that Jesus was not in any way suggesting an act of supererogation. The rich young ruler was not willing to obey the command of Christ which for him was to sell all and give to the poor. The man chose to turn away rather than perform the duty assigned to him by Christ. In doing so, he failed to pay his morally praiseworthy debt.

Based on the original Greek as well as the fact that Jesus let him walk away, I suggest that there is no *counsel of perfection* in this passage. Jesus was simply inviting the man to fulfill that which was lacking in his individual life. If I am correct, Aquinas would have to look elsewhere to defend his view that it is possible for a Christian to perform an act of supererogation (For Aquinas, *counsel of perfection)* towards God.

In opposition to Aquinas and the Catholic Church, the United Methodist Church (UMC) takes a strong stand that acts of supererogation should not be taught in Christian ethics. Because they did not break down the question into its two subsequent questions, we are left only to presume that their stance is that in no way whatsoever are acts of supererogation possible. Taken from the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, John Wesley provided the American Methodists with a doctrinal statement containing twenty-four "Articles of Religion" (Foundational Documents). These served as "basic statements of belief" and were first published in the church's *Book of Discipline* in 1790 (Foundational Documents). Of these twenty-four, Article XI, titled, "Of Works of Supererogation," is quite possibly the most straight-forward answer to be found on this issue given by any denomination within Protestantism. It reads,

> Voluntary works—besides, over and above God's commandments—which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogance and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required; whereas Christ saith plainly: When you have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants. (The Articles of Religion)

In the above article, the scripture referenced as a defense is Luke 17:10. They interpret Luke 17:10 as informing Christians that *supererogation* is an arrogant doctrine to teach. There are two views as to what exactly is meant. Either *supererogation* is acceptable to believe but wrong to teach, or else it is wrong to teach because it is in fact an errant doctrine. I opt for the latter interpretation. To believe one thing and teach another is frowned upon in Christianity. Christians are continually admonished to teach others what one believes. In light of this, I suggest that Wesley and the UMC not only discourage the teaching of supererogation, but even more importantly, do not believe acts of supererogation are possible in the first place. This would imply that their reference to Luke 17:10 is an argument against the possibility of supererogation in Christian ethics as opposed to a mere instruction to Methodist leaders not to teach the doctrine. However, I will argue that John Wesley and the UMC have misunderstood what is being said about *duty* in this passage. Before going any further, a little context is needed.

Luke 17:10 is best examined by taking into account both the immediate context (verses 7-10) as well as its broader context, Luke 17:1-10. Luke writes,

> Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, "Come immediately and sit down to eat"? But will he

> not say to him, "Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink"? He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, "We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done." (Luke 17.7-10)

In this passage, Jesus had just finished teaching the disciples in verses 1-4 about forgiving others. He has told them that if a brother sins against them seven times in one single day, they are to forgive that person all seven times. No doubt after hearing this, the disciples were more aware than ever of their need for his grace to fulfill this command. In verse five, they respond with the plea, "Increase our faith." Jesus then makes a comment about faith and then launches into the story of this slave. With this story, Jesus is teaching the disciples that even when they forgive in a manner this extravagant, they still are not going beyond what is required of them. Even actions this extravagant are characterized as a binding duty toward God.

When Jesus commands the slave to say, "We are unworthy slaves; we have done *only* that which we ought to have done," he is telling the servants the attitude he wants them to have after they "do all the things which are commanded" (Luke 17:10a). The emphasis of this passage is about the *attitude* he wants all Christians as servants to have toward God after they have done their duty (Minear 87). The only truth this passage reveals about *duty* is that when a Christian performs his duty, he is not to make a big deal out of it as the Pharisees so often did in their attempt to gain the approval of people (see Matthew 6:2). Jesus doesn't want a band of egotistical followers running around. The

importance of this cannot be overstated. His words are not at all intended to support or refute the possibility of the supererogatory. The focus of Jesus' teaching in this passage is that when a Christian performs a *duty*, his attitude should be that of humility, for he has only done what he ought to have done. Teaching a group of men about what attitude to have after performing a duty is an entirely different issue than whether or not it is possible to go above and beyond the call of duty. Considering the context, it is of little consequence whether or not the supererogatory is possible. Whether it is possible or not, this has no bearing upon what Jesus is communicating in this passage. Jesus is simply making clear that he wants his disciples to walk in humility after they perform a duty. Trying to use this passage to argue that acts of supererogation toward God are not possible is too far a stretch in light of the overall context. This does not necessarily prove that acts of supererogation are impossible in Christian ethics, but only that Luke 17:7-10 cannot be used to defend such a view. One must turn elsewhere.

I now turn to the issue of celibacy in the New Testament and the writing of Hans Martensen. It is incumbent upon every Christian ethicist dealing with the supererogatory to address the issue of celibacy. The clearest reason for this is because among all the issues addressed in the New Testament, celibacy more than most appears to be the quintessential *supererogatory* deed. A celibate person is distinguished from a person who just happens to be unmarried. Celibacy is an intentional choice to be single for a season or even for life so that one can be free from distractions in his or her devotion to God. Paul captures this when he wrote, "But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his

wife" (1 Corinthians 7:32-33). In order to show that celibacy is in fact not a supererogatory deed unto God, a careful defense is required.

In Matthew 19:3, Pharisees ask Jesus whether or not it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason. Picking up in the middle of his response, Jesus says,

> They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?" He [Jesus] said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality [fornication], and marries another woman commits adultery." The disciples said to Him, "If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry." But He said to them, "Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it." (Matt. 19.7-12)

Following these strong words of Jesus about divorce, the disciples conclude that it is best not to marry (Matt. 19.10). Jesus doesn't correct them. It is important to note that this does not at all imply that Jesus is scorning the institution of marriage. On the contrary, in the very beginning God (which in light of the Trinity includes Jesus Christ; see John 1:1-5 and Colossians 1:13-18) declared that it was not good for man to be alone and created a woman who then became Adam's wife (Genesis 2:18; 2:24). That said, the words of

Jesus do seem to convey the message that celibacy is a higher path for those who are willing to receive it or those to whom it has been given.

The last words of Christ in this passage, "He who is able to accept this, let him accept it" (Matt. 19:12), does seem to possess an *optional* rather than *obligatory* tone. This is significant because this is usually considered characteristic of *duties,* not acts of supererogation. No doubt Jesus is telling his disciples that if one can accept such a lifestyle, then one should do so. However, Jesus also said concerning celibacy, "Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given" (Matt. 19:11). For the eunuch who made himself so for the sake of God's kingdom, this word "given" carries with it the idea that celibacy is first and foremost a *calling* given by God to an individual person. By *calling,* I simply mean that God has a specific purpose for each and every individual (see Jeremiah 29:11) and that as part of that tailored-made purpose, God will lead, guide, and command different individuals in different ways. Now, it is obvious that one must still choose whether or not to receive or reject the various instructions from God throughout one's life that one's destiny is comprised of. Yet, what is important about the word, given, is that *celibacy* is first a *calling* before it is a *choice.* God's pre-ordained *calling* comes first. He communicates it to the person, and then the person decides whether or not to receive or reject it. To reject it is to refuse the path God has chosen for that person. In light of the Christian truth that God calls individuals to specific tasks, celibacy is a particular calling that one is to choose only if one has been previously called too it. In that light, to accept it is to obey and to not accept is to disobey. The Christian reality of calling changes what otherwise appears to be

supererogatory. So though celibacy is not for every Christian, for those it is given, it is a sin to reject.

This idea of celibacy being *given* as part of one's destiny is also found in Paul's writings to the church in Corinth. In reference to his celibate lifestyle, he wrote, "Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that" (1 Corinthians 7:7). The agreement between Christ and Paul is striking. A *gift* is something *given*, and these are the two exact words concerning celibacy used by Paul and Christ, respectively.

Because celibacy is first given, the person who chooses to follow the words of Christ and accept it is really only obeying a specific instruction from God that is a part of that single individual's particular destiny. In light of an individual's calling, there are specific instructions that if that person ignores, will result in him or her *not* fulfilling the purpose that God intended. Besides the more general commands given to all Christians such as loving God and loving others, if a person does not fulfill one's specific destiny (being a pastor, educator, business man or woman, stay-at-home mom, artist, etc.), that person as well fails to live out what God created him or her for. With this in mind, if a Christian refuses to obey that specific instruction or set of instructions given by God, that person will fail to step into the specific destiny that is God's will.

All through the Bible one can see evidence of this. Moses' specific purpose was to lead the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt. Nehemiah's specific purpose was to rebuild Jerusalem. David's specific purpose was to be a king in Israel. Rahab's specific purpose was to aid the spies and by proving a friend of the Jews, become a part of the linage of Jesus. John the Baptist's specific calling was to be the voice in the wilderness prophecied

by Isaiah over 700 years earlier that would pave the way for Christ (Isaiah 40:1-3). The point is that fundamental to studying any issue in Christianity is recognizing that God sees individuals and creates them for a specific purpose. It is not possible to treat any issue intellectually within Christianity without taking into consideration this personal aspect of God's character and activity. Considering that God creates each person with a specific destiny and purpose in mind, the specific instructions to each person take on the same *duty status* as the more general commands. If either is rejected, God's purpose for that person is thwarted. Thus, specific instructions such as the *call to celibacy* becomes both morally praiseworthy and obligatory for that person whose God-given destiny includes them remaining in an unmarried state.

For example, let us imagine that there is a man named Danny. Danny lives in Kansas City and has never planned to leave the United States. However, a large part of Danny's destiny that God has created him for is to live in Mexico, start an orphanage, and be a father to the fatherless. With this in mind, one thing that God will have to do at some point is tell Danny to move to Mexico. He cannot begin an orphanage and help kids without first going to Mexico. To use the language in Matthew 19:11, this has been given to Danny. It is his destiny. If he decides to ignore God and not move to Mexico, he has disobeyed the command of God specific to him which in turn will lead to the forfeiture of his God-given purpose. It is morally wrong for a Christian to reject God's purpose because one has a duty to do God's will. To refuse it would be classified as *rebellion*, a sin. Within the context of Christianity as well as other monotheistic religions, a moral wrong essentially is that which goes against the will of God. It is

morally wrong for a Christian to reject God's will, whether universal or specific in nature.

In this example, the command to move to Mexico was in fact a duty. Assuming that Danny did not go, not only was he failing his duty to obey God, he was also rejecting his obligation as a Christian to walk out the destiny God has for him in order to glorify Christ. For Danny, it was *right* for him to move to Mexico and *wrong* not to. Yet, one cannot say it is a *duty* proper for the sheer fact that all Christians are not called to go to Mexico. This raises an interesting dilemma. On the one hand, for Danny, moving to Mexico is a duty on par with every other duty. If he doesn't do it, he rejects God's command to move as well as rejecting God's overall destiny for his life. Using the language of the New Testament for celibacy, one might describe the *move to Mexico* as a given for Danny. In other words, if he desires to fulfill his duty toward God, this command he must accept. On the other hand, for another person whose destiny requires living in India, moving to Mexico is not *given* to that individual. Returning to the issue of celibacy, the situation is very similar to the above example. God calls some to *celibacy* and others to *marriage*. If one is called to celibacy and he marries, he has committed the same wrong Danny committed in not moving to Mexico. The opposite is also true. If God calls a particular Christian to marriage and that person chooses to be celibate, then this person also has rejected what was *given* as a command in light of God's destiny for them personally. This is the position Hans Martensen takes. Concerning the state of celibacy (as well as the story of the rich young ruler), he writes,

> …no one can do more than fulfill his God-given destiny. Gospel exhortations are therefore nothing else than gospel precepts for single individuals, and under

> special circumstances, and therefore cannot be expressed in the form of universal and unconditional commands, although they are not less binding on the individual concerned than are the universal precepts which apply to all. (424)

Martensen's language is very intentional. It appears he has Aquinas' distinction in mind when he wrote that those *gospel exhortations* can become *precepts for single individuals*. Aquinas used the word, precepts (*precepts of the Law*), to indicate those commands that for Christians are universally binding. Martensen is arguing that under the *special circumstances* of one's God-given destiny, there are those *gospel exhortations* (what Aquinas referred to as, counsels of perfection) that become for the single individual a command on par with those duties that all Christians owe such as *loving one's neighbor as oneself*. Again, Martensen writes,

> Under the same point of view we must regard the words of Paul (1 Cor. vii. 7) regarding the unmarried condition. It has the form of an advice; for as he addresses all, the individual formula cannot be adopted. But he who, on the ground of the circumstances of the time and of individuality, remains unmarried, only fulfills his individual duty, and has therefore no higher perfection than he who with a good conscience lives in the married state. The principal thing is, that everyone must be what God designed him to be. This superfluous virtue is of the Evil One. (424-425)

So though celibacy is not universally binding on *every* Christian as are rock-bottom duties, it is nonetheless *not* supererogatory because for the person to whom it has been *given*, for him personally it is just as much obligatory as those universally binding. To use Martensen's language, if God has *designed* one to be celibate in his much larger

purpose, than it is not merely *advice* as to how to go the extra mile and pay out to God more than is owed. Thus, the issue of celibacy cannot be used as an *example of* or *justification for* positing that acts of supererogation are possible toward God.

To conclude this section, I turn to the writings of George Hubbard and the emphasis he places on the element of sacrifice in Christianity and more specifically, *Christian ethics.* Part of the reason that the majority of Christians if pressed on the issue tend to think that there are supererogatory actions one can perform toward God is that the element of sacrifice has been marginalized in many churches. Concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ, Hubbard writes, "Not only does it include the possibility or privilege of sacrifice, but it makes sacrifice a necessary element of righteousness" (385). He goes on to write,

> We have not discovered the real meaning of the gospel or its bearing upon our life till we understand that Calvary is a permanent feature on the landscape of all Christian morality and that the cross is a necessary instrument for carving out every true character. (386)

Hubbard is arguing that because such radical sacrifice is both *modeled for* and *commanded of* Christians, even the utmost acts of self-denial and sacrifice still do not go beyond what one owes God. He goes as far as to write, "Even Jesus Christ never did perform, never could perform, a 'work of supererogation'" (386). This in a sense resembles the negative position Susan Hale takes concerning the supererogatory when she writes, "I claim that there are no supererogatory actions; rather, all actions which are morally good are morally required" (274). In other words, no matter how much sacrifice

a morally good action might require, it according to Hubbard still does not surpass what one ought to do for God.

To point out just how central *sacrifice* is to the gospel, Hubbard calls attention to when Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). These exact words are recorded a total of four times in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 10:38, Matt. 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23). No doubt that all three writers considered these words of Christ as indispensable to communicating the *heart* of the Gospel. Matthew Henry wrote of this scripture, "Though the disciples of Christ are not all crucified, yet they all bear their cross, and must bear it in the way of duty" (Henry). The call from Jesus to "come after Me" (Luke 9.23) is him communicating that if a person is truly to become a Christian, it is not an option whether or not one lives a life of sacrifice.

In Philippians 2:3-8, Paul describes the attitude a Christian is to have in light of the extent Christ went to in order to serve people by offering reconciliation with God. He wrote,

> Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:3-8)

Jesus emptied Himself, laying aside the privileges of His place in Heaven to come here on earth among men. Paul goes on to say that Jesus not only came to earth (*the Incarnation*), but that He was also "obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8). In verse five a Christian is commanded to have the same attitude as Christ. Therefore, even if for a Christian this obedient attitude results in a physical death (martyrdom), a Christian has done nothing more than obey the injunction given in verse five. As radical as it may appear, even in the case of martyrdom, a follower of Christ has only done his duty.

Our tendency is to dismiss those actions having significant consequences as being *supererogatory* in nature. However, I believe that self-preservation, not a true interpretation of the *call of Christ*, is at the heart of this psychological maneuvering. Hubbard writes,

> Write the principle of self-sacrifice into our ethical ideal and it would demolish much of our self-complacency, it would shed a light wholly new on many an act which we now deem specially meritorious, it would greatly modify the significance of the words "benevolence" and "charity", which we use so readily and with so much delight. It would sweep from our vocabulary a whole class of words by which we describe those acts which we deemed extra-righteous. (390; *extra-righteous was Hubbard's way in this particular passage of saying supererogatory)*

If the supererogatory exists, then a Christian is luxuriously allowed the freedom to relegate the element of sacrifice to the category of *optional* as opposed to *obligatory*.

The New Testament does not allow for this obligatory-to-optional re-categorization of the element of sacrifice.

John wrote, "…the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 John 2:6). How did Christ walk? He lived a life of extreme sacrifice and servant hood as he constantly placed others before himself. Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament sought to "[erect] a cross in the pathway of every disciple…a standard of morality henceforward for all who should accept his leadership" (387). If the call of Christ to those who want to be a disciple was partial sacrifice, then Christians would be justified in their search for those actions that one does not owe to God as an obligatory duty. However, Christ went so far as to die for us and then commanded us to be willing to go that same distance. With the element of sacrifice being rightly returned to the heart of the Gospel and its demand on the lives of all Christians, it does not seem possible that a Christian could perform an act of supererogation toward God.

Section II

In section I, I defended the position that it is not possible for a Christian to perform an act of supererogation toward God. When asking about the possibility of the supererogatory in Christian ethics, the second question that must addressed is, "Is it possible to perform a supererogatory action toward another person?" I will argue that it is indeed possible. This is the position that Thomas Aquinas takes in his *Summa Theologica*. First, Jesus' teaching about one's enemies will be addressed. Second, I will turn to the writings of Thomas Aquinas. Third, Jesus' parable of *The Good Samaritan* will be examined. Fourth, this parable will then serve as a fitting context to introduce the

practice of *living organ donation* (LOD). The reason I have chosen LOD is because it is a clear example of an act of *supererogation* by one person to another in Christian ethics.

In Jesus' first sermon labeled by theologians as *The Sermon on the Mount,* He spoke,

> You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. (Matthew 5.38-41)

The phrase *going the extra mile* is one of the more common, colloquial expressions in Western Culture and finds its origin in the words of Jesus. When people use this phrase, they are implying that a person did more than was expected, did more than any person was required to do, and went a mile past what anybody in the their right mind would consider obligatory. It is evident from the commonality of this colloquialism in our society that for the most part, we are a people who tend toward the belief that the supererogatory is indeed possible one to another.

First of all, anyone who uses this expression to imply that someone has done more than their duty is in reality misusing these words of Jesus. When one reads this passage, Jesus never implies that if one goes the second mile, then one will have exceeded the limits of duty as a Christian. *Going the second mile* for Jesus took on the nature of a command given to those who would choose to love Him and live their life for Him. So, though there is no harm in people using this to imply that someone has done more than his or her duty, it is in a technical sense a misapplication of the words of Christ.

At first glance, this seems to possibly suggest that there is no such thing as an act of supererogation one to another in Christian ethics. If Jesus is telling all who choose to follow Him that going the second mile *even* for an enemy is a moral obligation, then what could possibly remain beyond duty in light of such a radical injunction? As with any text, it is crucial to keep the context in mind.

In Matthew chapter five, Jesus says some variation of the phrase "You have heard that it was said" six different times. Jesus is pointing out to the religious leaders of his day (Pharisees and Sadducees) that they had interpreted the laws of the Old Testament in a heartless, legalistic manner. Jesus is redefining adultery as not just the physical act of sex with another woman other than your wife, but also as the thought of it entertained and meditated upon in one's heart. Jesus in another location shifts the focus from murder to where murder originates, that is, an angry heart. As Matthew Henry wrote of this passage, "All rash anger is heart murder." The point is that Jesus is trying to shift these religious men away from a shallow, superficial interpretation of certain Jewish laws

In this specific passage dealing with one's enemies, Jesus is addressing the topic of *revenge*. He begins by quoting from the Old Testament passage, Leviticus 24:19-20. It reads, "If a man causes disfigurement of his neighbor, as he has done, so shall it be done to him—fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has caused disfigurement of a man, so shall it be done to him." Leviticus was written to give the Israelite nation *identity*. The Israelites had just fled over 400 years of bondage in Egypt and besides the ten commandments that they had just received, had no sense of who they were, what principles they would adopt, or how their system of retributive justice would function. God was giving this nation identity which included a skeleton sketch of a

justice system. As John Wesley states, this "eye-for-eye" part of the law was given "as a direction to judges" to ease "violent and barbarous assaults" (John Wesley's Notes on the Bible). The problem as Wesley notes is that this law was no longer viewed solely as a direction to judges, but rather was "encouraging bitter and rigorous revenge" in its misapplication. So Jesus comes along and addresses this dark bent toward revenge that people as well as religious leaders were justifying by this passage in Leviticus. Essentially, Jesus is telling everyone that revenge is not their business, and that if people are going to honor God rightly, they will leave revenge to God's doing. No one is allowed the freedom to execute their own revenge upon an enemy without it being a grievous sin in the eyes of God.

The main reason I introduce this passage is because the language that people use most often to describe acts of supererogation is ironically from a part of Jesus' teaching where He is actually giving instructions, not suggestions. However, it would be going too far to conclude from this that acts of supererogation between persons is not possible in Christian ethics. The overall intention in addressing this passage is simply to aid in eliminating a potential point of confusion.

As alluded to earlier, Thomas Aquinas addresses *supererogation* in two different places. The first instance was covered in section one because it concerned a person's actions toward God. This second instance concerns the possibility of acts of supererogation one person to another. Aquinas states that supererogatory acts in this direction are possible.

This second treatment of the issue is located in the more general section where Aquinas is answering the question, "Whether a Man is Bound to Give Thanks to Every

Benefactor?" (Section II-II, Question 106, Article 3, 623). He then lists six objections to this question and then proceeds in logical fashion to refute each objection one-by-one. The fourth objection he presents under this specific heading reads, "Further, no thanks are due to a slave, for all that he is belongs to his master. Yet sometimes a slave does a good turn to his master. Therefore gratitude is not due to every benefactor" (II-II, 623). Aquinas responds,

> As Seneca observes (De Benef. iii), "when a slave does what is wont to be demanded of a slave, it is part of his service: when he does more than a slave is bound to do, it is a favor: for as soon as he does anything from a motive of friendship, if indeed that be his motive, it is no longer called service." Wherefore gratitude is due even to a slave, when he does more than his duty. (624)

He is arguing that there are instances where even a master owes a slave gratitude due to the slave doing something that was "more than his duty" (624). This *more than his duty* is a clear endorsement of an act of supererogation one to another (in this case, a slave toward his master).

Recalling the parable of Jesus about the servant who comes in from the field and does what is expected of him (prepare a meal for the master), Jesus said of the master, "Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not" (Luke 17:9). Jesus is simply stating that when a servant has done what is expected of him, the master is under no obligation to thank him. This is not to say that the master cannot thank him nor is it to say that it would not be the kind thing to do, but only that he is not bound to. Jesus' parable in this passage only addresses a situation in which a slave merely did what was expected of him. On the other hand, if a slave does more than his

duty, Aquinas states that the master does in fact owe the slave gratitude because the slave's action was a "favor…from a motive of friendship" rather than "part of his service" (624). Similar to how Urmson provided two examples in defense of the supererogatory, Aquinas thinks this example suffices as support for his view that it is possible for a Christian to perform an act of supererogation toward another person. I argue in this section that Aquinas is correct. I now turn to the *Parable of the Good Samaritan* for a more in depth treatment of the issue.

Why this parable? For one, it is the first place that the Latin word for *supererogation* occurs. Second, because it is easy to think that the actions of the *Good Samaritan* are in fact supererogatory in nature though it appears Jesus' teaching possesses more of a *duty* tone than a tone of *supererogation.* And third, it provides a convenient context to introduce a handful of specific situations concerning *organ donation* that serves as one of the clearest examples of an act of supererogation one to another.

As well-known as this parable is, only Luke tells it in his gospel. It is accepted by many inside and outside Christianity as a noble ideal worthy of emulating. It is found in Luke 10:30-37. However, the story really begins with a question from a lawyer. This lawyer, an expert in the Mosaic Law, stood and asked Jesus about what was required so that he could "inherit eternal life" (Luke 10:25). Jesus asked him what he thought based on his reading of the law and the lawyer responded, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). Jesus then told him that he had answered correctly and that if he does the very thing he answered, he would have eternal life (Luke 10:27-28). Rather than the conversation ending, the lawyer attempted to

"justify himself" and asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:28-29). This question was very important to the Jewish intellectuals of Luke's day. Michel Gourgues writes,

> The question seems to have been often debated in Judaism, especially in scribal schools. The problem was to determine the implications of the precept contained in Leviticus 19:18, which has been quoted in Luke 10:27, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Who exactly was this neighbor? (712)

The question also hints at the idea that the lawyer may have been more interested in trying to figure out how far he didn't have to go rather than how far he did. Riemer Roukema expresses this idea by writing, "In fact, the lawyer's question 'Who is my neighbor?' meant: 'Whom do I have to love?'" (56).

Following this exchange, Jesus launches into this particular parable. Luke writes,

> Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.' Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the

> robbers' hands?" And he [the lawyer] said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said, "Go and do the same." (Luke 10.30-37).

These words of Christ would have been shocking to every Jew. Jews considered Samaritans as *enemies*, and yet, he was the one who stopped rather than the priest and Levite. A Samaritan would have been one of the last people the Israelites would have considered a neighbor, so when Jesus answered the *neighbor* question in this manner, it did not go unnoticed. Essentially, Jesus told all who were listening that the Samaritan *proved to be a neighbor* rather than the other two who shared their same national identity.

Before going any further, it is important to note that not all theologians in church history have interpreted this parable as an ethical instruction. Several have opted for a much more *allegorical interpretation of the text.* Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Augustine were among these (Roukema 58-59; 60-61; 69-70). In this parable, Irenaeus interprets the *Good Samaritan* as Christ, the *robbers* as the devil, and *wounded man* as mankind in general who has fallen prey to Satan (59). Irenaeus then interprets the inn keeper as the Holy Spirit who Jesus entrusted the wounded man to (59). As one can see, the allegorical interpretation of the text is not all that practical. Although this type of interpretation was prominent, a more literal interpretation was also embraced. Roukema writes of Augustine that he,

> …makes it clear that we should behave like the Samaritan to everyone who is in need of compassion. He [Augustine] adds to this that we should consider as our neighbor someone who has compassion for us. It appears that Augustine is fully aware that by means of this parable Jesus gave a moral injunction." (70)

As indicated by the various interpretations by theologians in church history, Jesus' teachings such as the *Parable of the Good Samaritan* can without doubt possess a multilayered meaning. Like Augustine, though allegorical interpretations may be well-founded, my focus on the ethical nature of the passage is not without precedent.

Also of note is that the words of Jesus might at first appear at odds with Paul's writings. Paul wrote, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). According to Paul, being right with God was a matter of faith, not works, and yet Jesus was saying one had to actually do something if one wanted eternal life (that is, to love others). But these two are not necessarily contradictory. Synthesizing the two, though one is saved by grace, the evidence of this salvation received is none other than what Jesus said one would do if one wanted to inherit eternal life, that is, *love God* and *love others as oneself.* The point is not to get into an in depth theological debate on this issue. This is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is important to note that the words of Jesus and the words of Paul are not necessarily contradicting each other.

There are four things that are clear in this passage. First, that loving one's neighbor as oneself is a duty for a Christian. Second, loving one's neighbor as oneself requires sacrificial action at times. It is not the thought that counts. Third, his followers are to view the Samaritans as falling within, not outside, the category of *neighbor.* And fourth, Jesus was rebuking the lack of compassion and inaction of the two offices that should have been the first to respond: *the priest and the Levite.* Yet, there remains some ambiguity. Though the overall love that this Samaritan showed was depicted by Christ as nothing more than one fulfilling the obligation to love's one's neighbor as oneself, is that

true for every single act the Samaritan performed? Does one have to go to this length every time in order to fulfill one's Christian duty? What about half this distance? What if the Samaritan had bandaged him and taken him to the inn and not left the two denarii? It is unclear whether or not Jesus was making an overall point or whether he was specifically mapping out just how far one should go in every similar instance if one desires to fulfill the obligation to love others as oneself.

Though important to acknowledge this ambiguity, there is still enough in this passage to make a case in favor of the supererogatory from one person to another in Christian ethics. To do so, a little imagination is needed. Let's imagine two different scenarios.

In scenario one, the beast that the Good Samaritan used to carry the half-dead man to the inn is the *only* beast that he owned. When they both arrived at the inn, the Good Samaritan went into the inn keeper and told him the situation. As in the original story, he gave the inn keeper two denarii and told him that whatever more is needed, he will repay it when he comes back into town. However, he does not stop there. He proceeds to tell the inn keeper that he is also giving his only beast to the wounded man. He instructs the inn keeper to inform the man once he heals that the beast is his and that he hopes it is both a physical help and a source of encouragement to the man. The inn keeper agrees, and once the man healed, the inn keeper told him that the beast outside was now his beast.

In scenario two, every detail in the original story remains the same until they arrive at the inn. Once there, the Good Samaritan realizes that the half-dead man is semi-conscious. He asks the wounded man how much he thinks had been stolen from him on

the road. The man informs him that he had approximately five denarii (five days wages) stolen. As in the original story, the *Good Samaritan* proceeds to give the inn keeper two denarii and makes the promise to repay him upon return for any additional costs. However, before parting, the Good Samaritan also agrees to leave the wounded man five denarii to cover what he had stolen. Not only this, but he goes on to leave another five denarii figuring that the man is not going to be able to work for a few days due to his injuries. He is hoping that this extra five will enable the wounded man to have a day's wage for a few days after he is well enough to leave the inn.

With these two imaginary scenarios in view, I suggest that in both of these instances there is an example of a supererogatory deed on the part of the Samaritan. If correct, then it would indeed be possible for a Christian to perform acts of supererogation toward another human person. In the first scenario, the Good Samaritan gave the half-dead man his only beast. Now, it is obvious that Jesus would not frown upon such a generous behavior. It is also obvious that this act of generosity in Christian ethics would be deemed *morally praiseworthy*. However, I suggest the Good Samaritan by was under no obligation to give the wounded man his *only* beast. It was not a moral debt he owed to this man. Recall that Jesus affirmed the lawyer's words that one is to love one's neighbor *as oneself.* If the Good Samaritan gave the man his only beast, now the man is actually better off in this one area than the Good Samaritan. One could say that he loved his neighbor *more than himself*, for by his actions he has left this wounded man in a better position than he left himself (in this one area). If the Good Samaritan had two beasts and gave the man one, then we might say that he loved the man as he did himself in making sure the man had one beast just as the Good Samaritan would now have. However, in

scenario one, this is not what happened. I think most would be in agreement that Jesus would not tell the Good Samaritan in scenario one that it was his *duty* to give him his *only* beast. Based on the original parable that Jesus told as an example of how to fulfill one's duty to love a neighbor, *scenario one* paints a picture of the Good Samaritan going "far beyond" (Urmson 201) his Christian obligation. He paid out more than was required by duty. Giving the wounded man his *only* beast was a supererogatory deed performed toward another person.

In scenario two, it is a milder version of *supererogation*. It is what Urmson referred to as "just beyond one's duty" (205). In this imaginary scenario two, the Good Samaritan does everything he did in the original story. However, he wanted to do a little something more. Figuring that the wounded man was going to go through enough difficulties with the physical healing and rehabilitation process, the last thing he wanted this man to have to worry about was money. So, not only did he give the inn keeper two denarii and promise to repay anything else needed while that man was recovering, he also gave the wounded man an additional ten denarii. This would cover what was stolen as well as an additional five days wages. I want to call attention to two things. As in scenario one, I do not think that Jesus would consider this additional ten denarii part of the Good Samaritan's *duty* to love his neighbor. The Good Samaritan had already doctored the man, bandaged the man, carried him on his beast to the inn, paid two denarii to the inn keeper to take care of him, and even promised to pay however much it costs beyond the two denarii. Jesus seemed pleased to describe this as an example of loving one's neighbor though nowhere was it prescribed for the Samaritan (and thus Christian) to repay the wounded man for what was stolen. However, in scenario two, this is exactly

what the Good Samaritan does. After saving his life and making sure his recovery process in the inn was provided for, he also made sure that the man was given enough (and five more) so that it was as if the man was never robbed in the first place. Though Jesus would have been very pleased with such an act, I do not think He would have considered this as part of one's duty to a neighbor. He commanded to love one's neighbor as oneself. If I was robbed and beaten, Christians have a *duty* to make sure I was given a chance to heal and recover rather than die, but there is no duty to pay me the amount that was stolen from me. If they did, their deed would be supererogatory. Yet, it is not their duty in that situation nor would it be my duty if the tables were turned. In scenario two, I suggest that the extra ten denarii indeed is above and beyond what the Good Samaritan morally owes the wounded man based on the original story's description of what it means to love one's neighbor. Based on the original parable that Jesus told as an example of how to fulfill one's duty to love a neighbor as oneself, *scenario two* paints a picture of the Good Samaritan going "just beyond" (Urmson 205) his duty as a Christian. Both of these two hypothetical variations of the *Parable of the Good Samaritan* are intended to show that acts of supererogation one to another are possible in Christian ethics.

The last topic I want to discuss in this section involves *living organ donation* (LOD). Simply put, this is when a living person chooses to donate an organ rather than the usual method of retrieving an organ from the deceased. Types of organs that can be donated by a living person include the following: *kidney, liver (segment), lung (lobe), intestine (portion), and pancreas (portion)* (Living Donation 1). The advantage of not relying solely on deceased donors is that the number of available organs is increased. As

I proceed, it is important to keep in mind the words of Aristotle when he wrote of all ethical inquiries, "It is the mark of an educated mind to expect that amount of exactness in each kind [of subject] which the nature of the particular subject admits" (Aristotle 386).

In addressing this issue within the context of Christian ethics, one must ask, "Is the act of LOD a *duty* for a Christian?" Currently, the act of LOD is viewed by the Catholic Church as well as most Protestant denominations as *supererogatory* in nature. Among these denominations are Southern Baptists, Assembly of God, and United Methodists (Theological Perspectives). This is my position as well. I am not arguing anything out of the ordinary, but rather, simply attempting to set forth a defense for this position. In order to show that certain cases of LOD are examples of *supererogation* one to another, it must be shown *why* in light of the command to love one's neighbor, these cases do in fact supersede a Christian's obligations. This must be shown because as Bobby Howard writes, "Some scholars even promote this practice as not simply permissible but obligatory, based on the biblical mandate to love one another" (32).

There is little debate that LOD is a morally praiseworthy deed. That holds true inside and outside Christian ethics. The question remains however as to which kind of morally praiseworthy deed it is; the kind that is *obligatory* (thus owed) or the kind that is *optional*. As previously stated, the overwhelming majority of all three branches of Christianity (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestantism) all agree that LOD is *not* a duty (Theological Perspectives). Yet, how is it in light of Jesus' command to *love one's neighbor as oneself* that this is so?

First of all, it is paramount when investigating ethical issues from within Christian ethics to remember,

> One should not expect proof text from the Bible on this issue. Transplantation was not even a possibility at the time the gospels were being written. There were many things Jesus did not address directly. It is the Holy Spirit who leads us into the ways of enlightenment on matters which have surfaced in our time. (Theological Perspectives)

One must proceed with humility as we grapple with the New Testament to infer from general principles (for example, to love one's neighbor) specific conclusions. As Howard points out, Jesus, Paul, and James command Christians to love one's neighbor (Matt. 5:43, Romans 13:9, James 2:8). This is important because it shows the centrality of this command to love one's neighbor in Christian ethics. It is found all through the New Testament. In the *Parable of the Good Samaritan*, Jesus widens the view of who one's neighbor really is. It includes not only family and friends, but can also include strangers in certain situations. We have no reason to think that the Good Samaritan knew the man who the robbers had left for dead. Thus, if one is called to love one's neighbor with the kind of love exemplified by the Good Samaritan, then what justification do Christians have in not classifying LOD as a duty? I will give one reason in particular, that there are limits to the level of risk one is obligated to accept to his life and/or well-being.

Concerning *living organ donation*, every act of LOD involves significant risk. This *significance* does not imply that negative side effects occur often, but rather, that the side effects that could arise are very serious. All LOD surgeries are considered major surgeries and include serious risks to the donor. These possible surgical complications

include "pain, infection, blood loss (requiring transfusions), blood clots…injury to surrounding tissue or other organs, and even death" (Living Donation 6). Besides these, there are possible risks that are specific to each type of organ transplant. For example, the possible risks to the donor for kidney donation are "high blood pressure…organ impairment or failure that leads to the need for dialysis or transplantation; and even death" (7). In the past 12 years, over 60,000 individuals donated a kidney while alive. Of these, "at least seven have been listed for a kidney transplant" (8). Though the percentage is extremely small (though the phrase, at least, does not indicate precise record keeping), it does not change the fact that there are instances where after a donor gives one of his two kidneys, the one that remains begins to fail. It is important to look not at the quantity of cases in which this happens, but rather the seriousness of the possible risks. Simply put, there is a risk that the donor's one remaining kidney fails. The significance of this risk is monumental.

There are also possible risks to liver donation. As opposed to a kidney, only a segment of the donor's liver is removed (Living Donation 1). Possible risks include "infections…intestinal problems including blockages and tears; organ impairment or failure that leads to the need for transplantation; and even death" (7). In the past 12 years, five out of the total 3,313 liver donors had to be listed for a liver transplant "due to complications related to the donation surgery" (8).

Besides these physical risks, there are also psychological as well as financial risks. Psychologically, donors sometimes experience emotions such as anxiety, depression, regret, resentment, or anger (7). In addition, if the donor has medical problems in the future resulting from his donation, it is likely that neither the recipient's

nor the donor's insurance will cover those costs. Imagine situations where things go wrong and years upon years of follow-up are required. This could end up in the tens of thousands and possibly even millions of dollars of debt to the person who donated an organ. This in turn could affect the donor's family's present and future lifestyle as well as possibly draining any future inheritance that might have been secured for subsequent generations. I am not saying that this is a reason not to be a donor, but rather, that the costs are significant.

With the risks of LOD in full view, I now return to the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Part of the reason this parable is chosen is because interestingly enough, this parable comes up both in Jewish and Christian circles in relation to LOD. Christians are commanded to love their neighbors as they do themselves. As indicated earlier in chapter two, this command actually paves the way and leads into the *Parable of the Good Samaritan* in Luke 10. The *Parable of the Good Samaritan* was told by Jesus in response to the lawyer's question having to do with who his neighbor really was. As the story goes, the Good Samaritan makes significant sacrifices to make sure the man who was *half-dead* recovered. Rather than praise the actions of the Good Samaritan, Jesus tells the story as if to say that this is how one is to treat others if one desires to obey the command. The actions of the Good Samaritan are painted as a *duty,* nothing more. Essentially, it is a man who spends time and money to save a human being. However, for the rescuer, it does not appear in the text that there a risk to his life or well-being. Now imagine the rescuer as a living donor and the wounded man as the recipient who is going to die without the transplant. At first glance, this analogy seems to hold. It appears that indeed, it is a Christian's duty to come to the aid of a person who is going to die. However, the

analogy quickly breaks down. Unlike this parable, there are serious physical, emotional, and financial risks for the rescuer/donor. Granted, emotional and financial risks should not be considered a sufficient reason to let someone else die, but the possibility of lifelong physical impairment and/or death may. The situation Jesus describes in this parable is one that required sacrifice, not risk to one's life and limb. Now, I have no doubt that God would be pleased with every living person willing to donate an organ to someone else. After all, this embodies the sacrificial love that Jesus modeled on the cross and commanded His followers to extend to other people. This being said, LOD still cannot be classified as a *duty*. Not even Jesus' death on the cross is a perfect analogy. Jesus was not dying so that others could *physically* continue to live. His rescue was that of a spiritual one, providing a way of salvation by which all people could be reconciled to God both in the present and future if they so choose. Whether or not he died upon the cross, people would have continued to *physically* live (spiritual life is another issue). One could no doubt draw some spiritual parallels, but that is not the purpose of this thesis. It will suffice to say that references to Christ on the cross and the Parable of the Good Samaritan are not enough if one hopes to defend the view that LOD is a Christian *duty*.

As an overall rule, "The Protestant faith respects individual conscience and a person's right to make decisions regarding his or her own body" (Theological Perspectives). Because there is so much gray area concerning LOD and whether or not it is a *duty* or *act of supererogation* within Christian ethics, it is left up to individuals to decide what they perceive God's will for them to be in this area. If in the *Parable of the Good Samaritan* the rescuer would have had to risk death or serious bodily injury to rescue the victim, it is not for certain that Jesus would still have painted the picture of the

Good Samaritan as only doing his duty. If a stranger is about to get run over by a car and there is a chance I could save him though also a great chance I die in the process, it does not seem I am obligated to try and save the stranger. Unlike the Good Samaritan in the parable, there is a risk to one's life and/or well-being concerning LOD. When the physical risk reaches this outer limit, the action *in most cases* ceases to be a duty and becomes supererogatory in nature.

I qualified this last statement with *in most cases* for one simple reason. It is not beyond reason to imagine certain LOD situations where it could be argued that the potential donor is in fact obligated to follow through on behalf of the recipient. Let us pretend that there is a father about to die from an inoperative heart condition. Also, his son is about to die without a liver transplant. Considering the impending death of both as well as the fact that a parent has certain duties toward his or her child, this situation might be a likely candidate for an instance of LOD that might actually be classified as a duty for the potential donor. I am not arguing that it is, but rather, simply pointing out that there could possibly be extreme situations where LOD is in fact a binding duty upon a Christian (thanks to Professor Bruton who offered this hypothetical situation for consideration). However, I believe these instances are the exception, not the rule. The more typical LOD cases that occur every day are examples of supererogation one to another in Christian ethics.

I have argued the position in this section that acts of supererogation are possible one person to another in Christian ethics. Section one was committed to defending the position that it is not possible for a person to perform an act of supererogation toward God. Because acts of supererogation are possible in at least one of the two directions, the

overall conclusion therefore is that acts of supererogation are in fact possible in Christian ethics.

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN AND OVERSEAS AID: *DUTY OR SUPEREROGATORY?*

In Chapter II, section two, I concluded that acts of supererogation are possible in Christian ethics one person to another. Based on the examination in chapter two of the *Greek* word for *duty (*that is, *opheilo*) coupled with the Latin etymology of *supererogation*, this conclusion implies that it is possible for a Christian to do more than she is morally obligated to do for people in need. Because such acts are possible, the task remains for Christian ethicists to search out in each specific area what in fact is a *duty* and what actions are *supererogatory*.

One specific concern that ethicists must grapple with is that every day, 24,000 children die in the world from easily preventable causes such as hunger, malaria, diarrhea, measles, and pneumonia (World Vision website). If adults are included in this number, the death toll increases by several more thousand. Though poverty does exist in the United States, this type of *extreme* poverty exists primarily in countries overseas. These countries are commonly labeled Third World countries. In the past this reality was something we could do very little about. However, that has changed in the last few decades. Charitable organizations like UNICEF, OXFAM, World Vision, Compassion International, and Feed the Children have people stationed in the majority of these Third World countries. This is significant because if anyone wants to help, all she has to do is go to the organization's webpage and make a donation. In light of this, ethicists must ask the question "For a relatively affluent person situated in the West, is giving money to charitable organizations overseas to rescue lives a *duty* or an *act of supererogation*?" This specific type of giving, whether by mail or internet or some other means, will be

referred to as GARO ("Giving Aid to Rescue Overseas"). Such giving also includes actions such as donating one's time to raise awareness in hopes that more people will get involved or standing on a street corner to take up money to give to a charity. One could even get neighbors to pitch in and have a neighborhood garage sale with all the proceeds going to aid the desperately poor overseas. In this chapter, I narrow the focus by asking this question specifically of *Christians*. For Christians, are specific acts of GARO *duties* or *acts of supererogation*?

I will argue that instances of GARO are *particularly* good ways for a Christian to fulfill the much broader moral duty to help those in need. This will occupy section one. Assuming that my central claim is both plausible and well-defended, in section two I will address three rationalizations that are commonly exercised by people in an effort to feel justified in avoiding specific acts of GARO.

Section I

Instances of GARO are *particularly* good ways for a Christian to fulfill the much broader moral duty to help those in need. Many will have a problem with this position for the mere fact that it may appear weak and uncommitted. However, this position best reflects the true nature of the moral decisions one is faced with when deciding how to direct aid. In this section, I will do four things. First, I will explain what exactly is meant by a broad duty. Second, I will explain why it is that specific acts of GARO are *particularly* good ways for a Christian to fulfill the much broader duty to help those in need. The answer hinges upon what is at the heart of the moral life and teachings of Christ. In separate places, two qualifications to this central claim will be noted. Third, I will make a few comments as to what is specifically *Christian* about the central claim of

this chapter. Fourth, I will argue what is required to fulfill broad duties is indeterminate and requires a responsible, ongoing assessment as opportunities present themselves throughout the life of a Christian.

To begin with, what is meant by a broad duty? A *broad* duty is a moral principle that is obligatory yet general in nature and thus can only be fulfilled in specific ways unnamed in its general formulation. Consider the following by Paul McNamara:

> Suppose that in virtue of promising to get in touch with you, I become obligated to do so. Suppose also that I can fulfill this obligation in two ways: by writing you a letter or by stopping by on the way to the store. (Imagine that you're an eccentric who hates phones.) Add that my other obligations make me too busy permissibly to do both. Finally suppose that, morally speaking, I put in a better performance if I pay you a visit rather than write you, even though either one is permissible… (425-426)

In this case, I have a *broad* duty to get in touch with you because I made a promise. Yet, I cannot do this without doing so in some specific way. As McNamara suggests, I can write you a letter or stop by to see you in person. In addition, I could email you or send you a message on Facebook. The point is that my duty to keep my promise can only be fulfilled in some specific way *not* articulated in its basic formulation. So though my duty to keep my promise is general in nature, it must be fulfilled in "particular ways, ways that are not themselves required" (McNamara 425). Though there are many specific ways to fulfill the broad duty to keep my promise, I am in no way bound to do all of them. Fulfilling the promise in *every* possible way is not required of me. I must choose one.

Specific acts of GARO are no different. Part of our moral landscape is that no one individual or group of individuals can alleviate all of the suffering throughout the world. As alluded to earlier, 24,000 children die every day from easily preventable causes. But there are other extremely important issues as well. Thousands of girls throughout the world are being tragically and horribly abused as sex slaves. These girls are trafficked all over the globe, abused, used, and eventually discarded for new girls who have not been *used up*. As with kids dying from easily preventable causes, one can go online and donate money to World Vision and/or other charities that have certain programs in place to rescue these girls one at a time as people give. Though these girls are not always on the brink of death as the 24,000 are, they too are nevertheless in desperate situations.

Then there is the single mom right down the street who is working two or three jobs trying to provide for her kids. She too could use assistance. Then there is the local homeless shelter that could improve services offered if more money was donated from the private sector. The list goes on and on. There are many options a Christian can choose from to fulfill the broad duty to help those in need. The point is that in light of this broader duty, a Christian must choose one or some specific ways to fulfill the broader duty for the mere fact that no one can do it all. As in McNamara's example, helping those in need can only be done in specific ways *not* included in the general formulation of the duty. A person must choose among many specific options.

In light of so many worthy options near and far, no one option such as *acts of GARO* or *giving money to the single mom down the street* can be framed as a universal duty, binding at all times on all people. This would be too bold a claim and impossible to

defend for the simple reason that there are other causes that people can give to that are geared toward helping people who are just as desperate for aid only in a different way. This is David Schmidtz's criticism of Peter Singer's claim that everyone has a duty to specific acts of GARO. Schmidtz writes, "Am I committed to fighting whichever injustice happens to be firing the imagination of Peter Singer? Not at all. That's not what I'm here for. Like Singer, I decide for myself where to make my stand" (690). Every Christian is free to choose how she wants to give aid based on what concerns her most. David Schmidtz refers to this selection process as the "phenomenon of selective focus" (689).

Before going further, it is important to qualify the above claim. Though specific acts of GARO cannot be classified as a universal duty binding upon all people at all times, there are a select set of circumstances in which acts of GARO can be classified as a *duty*. These rare instances often hinge upon the act of making a promise. For example, if you promise online by something you fill out to give a certain amount of money for a certain amount of time, you are now obligated. Christian or not, almost everyone agrees it is morally wrong to not keep a promise in the absence of a good reason not to keep it. Or maybe you simply made a promise to God that you would give a certain amount of money to Compassion International over the next six months. You are now obligated to fulfill that promise. Or it could be that I pledged a certain amount of money to my local church who has asked every person in the congregation to pledge a certain amount of money for each quarter throughout the next year that will then be given as one lump sum to either a missionary or organization that is doing good work in helping people in dire poverty overseas. I did not have to pledge, but because I did, I am now morally

obligated. In all three instances, acts of GARO are duties only because of self-imposed obligations. Other than that, particular GARO acts are not duties for the reason discussed earlier, namely that there are too many other desperate needs that one could choose to get involved with instead. So though specific acts of GARO in select situations can be classified as duties, these are not at all frequent occurrences.

So then how are we to classify specific acts of GARO? The answer to this question is the central claim of this chapter, namely that specific acts of GARO are typically *particularly* good ways for a Christian to fulfill the more general duty to help those in need. Christians do well to prefer acts of GARO before other available options.

The reason that specific acts of GARO are *particularly* good ways for a Christian to fulfill the broad duty to help others is because this idea is most consistent with the actions and teachings of Jesus. Essentially, a Christian's moral code should be extracted from the life, actions, and teachings of Jesus Christ. Patrick Hogan writes, "An ethical system, such as that developed in Jesus' teachings and actions, provides us with a way of understanding and responding…" (97). In answering the question as to why acts of GARO are *particularly* good ways to fulfill the broad duty to help those in need, the following question must be answered: *What is at the heart of the life, actions, and teachings of Jesus Christ?*

Patrick Hogan writes,

> …an attentive reading of Luke reveals a normative system in which there is a very strong ethical presumption in favor of children, laity, ordinary people, women, dominated ethnic groups, the disabled, the poor, and a strong ethical presumption against their opposites…The teachings of Jesus indicate again and again that we

> should work against our natural inclinations – and against the views of many "Christian" activists – and instead begin with a strong evaluative and behavioral presumption in favor of the dispriveleged. (98)

In a more colloquial manner, Erwin Goodenough writes that Jesus had a "penchant for the underdog" (243). One of the most significant places to see this is in Luke, Chapter 4. Here Jesus is announcing what will be the focus of his "entire mission" (Hogan 109). Reading from Isaiah 61, he spoke "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed…" (Luke 4:18). He could have read from any passage in the Old Testament yet he reads this specific one. It is of no little consequence that every category he mentions (that is, the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed) is comprised of people who are extremely vulnerable, most often neglected, and severely oppressed.

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells his disciples what it will be like on the Day of Judgment when every person who has ever existed will stand before Christ. Jesus divides everyone into two groups, one on his right hand and the other on this left. To the group on his right, he says, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). He proceeds to praise this group for their favorable actions toward six different groups of people. The groups are as follows: *people who were hungry, thirsty, strangers with no place to stay, those having no clothes (naked), the sick, and those in prison.* These six categories that the group on the right are praised for helping have three things in common. First, all six are people in very vulnerable situations. Much of this vulnerability expressed here is in

relation to not having physical needs met. Second, all six categories are people who most often have lost hope. They are extremely vulnerable from a physical *and* emotional standpoint. Third, all six categories are those who most often are pushed to the margins of society, the margins of people's attention, and thus neglected the most.

Jesus mentions a similar group of people in Luke 14. He tells his followers that whenever they give a reception, make sure to invite the "poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind" (Luke 14:13). Later in the chapter, Jesus mentions this exact group again in another parable. Hogan writes, "…these stories have an ethical point: it was just these disabled people to whom Jesus devoted himself, and whom he found worthy of attention and care" (111). Again, this grouping involves those who are *most* vulnerable and neglected. Among other things, Jesus constantly shows kindness to prostitutes and lepers. These are two groups of extreme outcasts in his society. It is clear that the perspective that Jesus gave to his followers was one that leaned heavily in favor of the "least of them" (Matt. 25:40). This does not mean that Jesus loved needy people more than others. It also does not mean that the vulnerable possess a greater moral value than the prosperous. It simply means that "one fundamental principle of Jesus' ethics – perhaps the fundamental principle – is to base our thought and action on a strong evaluative and behavioral presumption in favor of the oppressed…" (Hogan 113). At the heart of Christian ethics is a call to *de-marginalize* the *least of them.*

Those that are the *least of them* is at the heart of the life, actions, and teachings of Jesus, so giving special attention to the most vulnerable and neglected is a top priority for a Christian. It stands to reason that whoever qualifies as the *most vulnerable* and *most neglected* will require the aid of Christians first and foremost. GARO recipients fit this

bill for two reasons: (1) the nature of their poverty is typically much more severe than others in need in the United States, and (2) the likelihood of the desperately poor in Third-World countries receiving aid apart from outside invention is very slim.

The first reason that recipients of GARO are among the most vulnerable and neglected in the world is because they are mostly located in Third-World countries where they are faced with conditions that many in the United States are never faced with. Poverty is not the same everywhere. In the recent edition of *Reject Apathy* magazine, there is a slice titled "The Modern Poor (Aren't Actually All That Poor)." This article takes a quick glance at the 43 million Americans who are considered "poor" (9). Among these 43 million, the following statistics are staggering as to just how well off some of our poor have it compared to the poor in Third-World countries: *78.3% have air conditioning, 81.4% have a microwave, 38.2% have a computer, 54.5% have a cell phone, 99.6% have a refrigerator, 48.6% have a coffee pot, 25% have a dishwasher, and 32.2% have a television.* This is not life-or-death poverty. To be fair, there are life-or-death instances of poverty right here on our own soil. Yet, these are few and far between compared with people in Third-World nations. On average, the poor in America do not experience the same level threat to one's life as do the 24,000 children that die every day in Third-World countries.

But let us pretend for argument's sake that this is not true, that it turns out that there are a large number of life-or-death poverty cases here in America. It would still be the case that potential GARO recipients are more vulnerable. The second reason that GARO recipients are much more vulnerable is that the likelihood of the poor in Third-World countries finding assistance is drastically lower than the chances of the poor in the

United States finding assistance (Bruton, personal correspondence). Even if all other factors were equalized, this alone would still warrant a worse assessment of poverty in Third-World nation cases. Here in the United States, most cities have multiple shelters for housing, feeding, clothing, and helping the poor. Some of these places take homeless people off the street, equip them with a basic set of job skills, and help them get into the workplace until they are financially able to move out on their own. Our own government at times provides money for these types of shelters through grants. Many churches are also involved in helping the poor. The point is that if you are poor in America, chances are you are not that far from a shelter, soup kitchen, or church. Though your conditions might be bad, the likelihood of finding assistance is rather good here in the United States.

This is not so in Third-World countries. Take the Horn of Africa for example. Due to the worse drought this region has experienced in 60 years, 13.3 million Africans are living in overwhelming poverty (Reject Apathy 50). Nearly 75% of the livestock have died and starvation abounds (50). Or consider Dadaab, Kenya. Dadaab is home to the world's largest refugee camp. This camp is a city of tents housing more than 400,000 malnourished refugees, 85% of whom are children and teenagers (50). In these communities, one cannot turn to a neighbor because they too are suffering. The poverty is so far reaching in some circumstances that there is no one nearby to turn too. One cannot even go to another nearby town. There are no shelters, churches, kitchens, or government housing just a few blocks away. And whether the government in each African country *will not* or simply *cannot* help, the basic fact remains that the conditions are getting worse, not better. When poverty conditions are this severe and far reaching, one cannot find a near enough person, church, or shelter that can help meet basic needs.

If not for international aid organizations, the situation would be even worse. For those in dire poverty here in the United States, their likelihood of finding assistance is immeasurably greater than the poor in Third-World countries. The Third-World poor are exponentially more vulnerable than the poor on our own soil.

Prioritizing the most vulnerable will highlight specific acts of GARO as *particularly* good ways to fulfill the duty to help others. Christianity embodies this type of ethic. So, while other ways of giving aid and helping people are morally praiseworthy, giving aid to the most vulnerable and most neglected is *particularly* praiseworthy. This is not to say that other options morally wrong, but simply that giving aid to the poor in Third-World countries is one of the most pure expressions of the call of Jesus to Christians everywhere to prioritize the *least*. GARO for the Christian is following the moral path of Jesus in giving special attention to those who are worse off. It is a *particularly* good way for a Christian to fulfill the duty to help others in need.

This is one of the major factors in distinguishing Christian ethics from other systems of ethics. It is not that other systems are opposed to helping the most vulnerable and neglected, but rather that this element does not lie at the core of the system as it does in Christian ethics. In Christian ethics, the *least of them* is at the core of the system. Whereas with other systems of ethics there is definitely a place for the most vulnerable, it is in Christian ethics that caring for the needs of the *most vulnerable* and *most neglected* takes center stage.

One additional qualifier is needed. Earlier I stated that though specific acts of GARO are *particularly* good ways for a Christian to fulfill the broader duty to help people in need, there are select instances that GARO acts can be classified as a *duty*.

Though few and far between, it is nonetheless possible. On the other side of coin, it is also possible in select circumstances that acts of GARO can be supererogatory. Again, this is not the norm, but it is possible and therefore worth mentioning. Consider the following case:

> *Brandon the Intern.* Brandon is a Christian and has just finished college. After a few stressful years of studying late nights and working on his off days, he wants to take a year off before entering the workforce. He decides that he wants to go and spend a year serving in the inner city of Chicago. He feels that the only way he will be able to serve the people is to live in that same area. He gets an internship with an organization that currently is positioned to help meet basic needs in Chicago's inner city. The organization will provide his basic needs in return for him serving. However, he will only have $50 extra each month after paying his bills due to a low intern stipend and a workload that does not allow him time or energy to work elsewhere to supplement this low income. Because of this extremely high level of sacrifice and only a very small amount of money left over, Brandon decides to spend that extra $35 a month on recreation such as buying music, going to see a movie, or going out to eat. He feels this helps him keep a fresh mind for the day-to-day grind. Yet, after all he does, it is still important to him to donate $15 of his meager $50 to World Vision each month to help rescue kids starving to death in Africa. The internship lasts nine months.

Brandon's entire life is a sacrifice for the local poor in Chicago. Due to the extravagant nature of his sacrificial lifestyle, the meager $50 he has remaining is his to spend. If he were to spend the entire $50 on himself, would we not consider him totally justified in

doing so because of how much he is already giving? The $15 he spends is clearly an act of supererogation for this Christian man.

As stated, these cases are not the norm. I doubt that many would dispute the claim that in America, the majority of affluent Christians are not giving aid to the extent that Brandon is. Yet, it is important to note this second qualification because it is at least possible that specific acts of GARO can be supererogatory.

Before concluding this section, I want to address a very important issue. For those who obligate themselves to acts of GARO by some sort of promise or for those who choose acts of GARO as their preferred way to fulfill the broader duty to help people in need, the exact amount to be given is indeterminate. In ethics, to say that what is required is indeterminate needs an explanation. The reason for this is that the minute someone says that some type of action is a *duty* or a *particularly* good way to fulfill a broader duty, what normally follows suit is a statement or discussion in regards to what needs to be done to fulfill that obligation. Yet, in the case of the broad duty such as the one being discussed, an exact amount or type of equation for figuring out an exact amount is not possible. There is no one individual for whom we can say exactly what the broad duty requires. It will be different from one person to the next. Due to this inevitable indeterminacy, some will let themselves off the hook far too easily. People do this from motives that are unacceptable from a Christian perspective. I will address this at the end of section two. For all those wanting to know from right motives what exactly is required, what answer can be given considering the previous claim that what needs to be given or done is indeterminate?

There have been philosophers who have taken a stab at offering a determinate criterion. Peter Singer is famous for the principle he called the "level of marginal utility" (241). He defines this principle as "the level at which, by giving more, I would cause as much suffering to myself or my dependents as I would relieve by my gift" (241). The basic idea is that you are obligated to give until you come to a point such that if you gave anything else, your living conditions would actually be reduced to the level of the people you are actually giving aid to. Liam Murphy also attempts to identify a concrete criterion. He recommends the "Cooperative Principle" (280). He defines this principle as,

> Each agent is required to act optimally – to perform the action that makes the best outcome – except in situations of partial compliance with this principle. In situations of partial compliance it is permissible to act optimally, but the sacrifice each agent is required to make is limited to the level of sacrifice that would be optimal if the situation were one of full compliance… (280)

The basic idea is that if there are 5,000 affluent Americans and *every* single one was committed to specific acts of GARO, whatever amount each would have to give in order to eliminate the need altogether is the amount that you are required to give whether the others actually give or not. Once this number is configured, every affluent person is required to give that amount. The person is free to give more but it is not necessary. It is of no consequence for Murphy whether or not other people actually give. All that matters is that you give what you would be required to give to eliminate the need under the hypothetical assumption that every other able person is going to give also. Murphy is not so naïve to think that every affluent person is actually going to give. Rather, he is simply providing a potential criterion that if people were willing to accept, could help affluent

persons to figure out what exactly the level of their obligation is. These are but two examples of philosophers who actually had the courage to set forth a potential criterion.

Though admirable, neither principle gives the precise answer many are looking for. One major problem with Singer's view is that if you did give till the level of marginal utility was reached, you very likely would end up in a financial situation that would not allow you to give more after that. Over the long run, giving a smaller amount than what Singer recommends might actually allow you to sustain a level of affluence that allows you to give again and again for the rest of your life. A second problem with Singer's principle is that it would vary person to person depending on who one is giving too. Figuring out where the line to his level of marginal utility actually is could be very, very difficult. With Murphy's principle, as creative and interesting as it is, the actual application would be nearly impossible. How can any of the relevant numbers actually be configured? Who counts as affluent? Do all affluent people give the same though their level of affluence differs? Where is the line drawn that determines who qualifies for aid and who does not? The bigger problem is that because the majority of people will not perform acts of GARO, it could be argued that the *Cooperative Principle* does not require enough of those who do want to give time or money to rescue lives overseas. Though others in the past have not done their moral job and this in part is why the problem is so enormous, do we in the present not have to take the resulting conditions into consideration when we get ready to give? It is quite possibly the case that because others have failed in the past, we in the present have inherited a *greater* moral responsibility than the Murphy's principle admits. The point with these two philosophers is that though each offered potential criteria, we still end up with more questions than answers.

So what is the correct view? Except for instances where a person has made a promise to give a specific amount to rescue GARO recipients, the exact amount one is obligated to give is and must remain *indeterminate* for those who choose acts of GARO as their preferred way to fulfill the broader duty to help people in need. This is the nature of broad duties such as *the obligation to help people in need.* Certain similarities can be drawn between what I call a broad duty and what Kant labels an imperfect duty.

Thomas Hill writes of Kant's philosophy, "Perfect duties directly prescribe or prohibit *actions* rather than the sort of indefinite *maxims* (to promote ends) prescribed (directly) by imperfect duties" (203). Whereas perfect duties give rise to very specific actions either to be done or avoided, imperfect duties are more general in their formulation. Thus, in some sense imperfect duties lead us to live by certain maxims rather than articulating a specific action or set of actions to perform (or not to perform). As Hill notes, the *principle of beneficence* is an "imperfect duty" (203). For our purposes, this principle is essentially the same as the broad need to help those in need. Hill goes on to write, "These implications of imperfect *duties for actions* can be expressed in the form 'Sometimes, to some extent, one ought…' as opposed to the more definite form of perfect duties, 'Always one ought…' or 'One must never…'" (204). With imperfect duties, being overzealous to nail down some exact criterion usually comes off somewhat naïve.

With this in mind, the honest position to take is to say that when it comes to the broad duty to help people in need, "Sometimes, to some extent, one ought" to give (204). If a person binds himself with some sort of promise to specific acts of GARO, then that person to the *extent* promised *ought* to give. For the person who chooses specific acts of

GARO as a means to fulfill the broad duty to help those in need, that person ought to give *sometimes* and to the *some extent* decided upon. How could this not vary from person to person and from situation to situation? After all, one person throughout life will at times be in a position to give much, at other times be in a position to give little, and at other times not be able to give. Each person's life takes different turns, most of which are unexpected. Consider the following case:

> Susan is a woman who has given 10% of her total income every month to GARO-related charities for the past 20 years. All of the sudden, she is in a horrible wreck and her insurance only covers half of the costs for the upcoming surgeries she will need to recover. After exiting the hospital, the hospital decides to set her up on monthly payments for $150 until her debt is paid off. With this additional $150 added to her monthly budget, she decides that she needs to adjust the amount she is giving to charity. She decides that for the next few years until her debt is paid off, she can only afford to give 3% of her total income every month to the charity.

This case illustrates that even in the life of *one* individual things are subject to change over the course of a lifetime. If this is true concerning one individual, then surely it is impossible to identify a general rule that can hold for *all* people in all instances.

The broad duty for a Christian to help people in need is a "Sometimes, to some extent, one ought" type of duty (204). As I have argued earlier, specific acts of GARO are *particularly* good ways to fulfill this broad duty. However, it is not the only way. What is important is that Christians understand the broad duty to help those in need as "requiring us to make the happiness of others a serious, major, continually relevant, life-

shaping end" (Hill 206). In other words, one or two token acts of beneficence are not adequate.

Furthermore, the action implication (*Sometimes, to some extent, one ought*) for broad duties makes room for the element of *sacrifice* that lies at the heart of Christian ethics. George Henry Hubbard wrote that the sacrifice of Jesus "was the setting up of a new ethical standard. It was designed to infuse the spirit and principle of sacrifice into the ordinary life of humanity" (387). When fulfilling broad duties, Christians must at times be willing to not just give, but give sacrificially. The action implication *Sometimes, to some extent, one ought* is not in any way at odds with the sacrificial principal in Christian ethics. There will be times that a Christian fulfills the broad duty to help someone in need that does not require very much. There will be other times that a Christian fulfills a broad duty to help someone in need that does require significant sacrifice. This action implication allows for both. If it did not allow for both, then it would have had to be rejected immediately.

Though an attempt at identifying a determinate criterion is respectable, in the end every attempt will fail. Broad duties do not tell us exactly what to do. Rather, a broad duty presents itself to a person who then must make specific, personal choices as to when and how to fulfill that duty. This at times will require sacrifice. Concerning the broad duty to help those in need, specific acts of GARO are *particularly* good ways for a Christian to fulfill this duty. Person by person, situation by situation, a Christian must decide what is morally required to fulfill the broad duty to help people who are in need.

In this section, I have explained what a broad duty consists of. Second, I argued that specific acts of GARO are *particularly* good ways for a follower of Christ to fulfill

the much broader duty to help those in need. This is because a specific act of GARO is one of the best options available to a Christian to fulfill the broader duty to help those who are most vulnerable and neglected. Those who are most vulnerable are the people Jesus went to first while commanding followers present and future do likewise. So while other ethical systems can make room for the most vulnerable and neglected, no system places those in this condition at the *heart* of the system as Christianity does. Christian ethics is a *least of them* ethic and recipients of GARO are among these *least*. Throughout a lifetime a Christian must assess and reassess what in every situation is required for the simple fact that a fixed amount cannot be determined beforehand.

Section II

Given that the central claim in section one is both plausible and well defended, here I will address in Section II three rationalizations or biases commonly exercised by people in the effort to justify GARO inaction. As argued in section one, specific acts of GARO are *particularly* good ways for a Christian to fulfill the broad duty to help those in need, but because there are other noble causes to give to as well, not every single Christian is obligated to give aid overseas. If someone chooses another option such as giving money to a local homeless shelter, that is morally acceptable. Yet, it is often the case that people give reasons for GARO inaction that are *not* adequate. These are attempts to rationalize behavior based on certain biases. The three I will focus on in this chapter are as follows: (1) *the Near-Far bias*, (2) *the Insignificance bias,* and (3) the *Line bias.* It is my goal to demonstrate that an attempt to justify GARO inaction on the grounds of any of these three biases is misguided.

The Near-Far bias is quite possibly the most popular rationalization given to justify GARO inaction. The Near-Far distinction refers to the physical distance between the person who possesses the means to rescue and the person who will soon die without aid intervention. The rationalization is as follows: *People have stricter, more demanding obligations to those who are near than those who are far.* Philosophers create multiple scenarios comparing situations near and far in an effort to determine exactly how far the limit of the *duty to rescue* extends. One of the best examples of this distinction is provided by Peter Unger. In "Living High and Letting Die," Peter Unger asks the reader to consider two scenarios. The first is a revision of Peter Singer's *The Pond.* Unger writes,

> *The Shallow Pond.* The path from the library at your university to the humanities lecture hall passes a shallow ornamental pond. On your way to give a lecture, you notice that a small child has fallen in and is in danger of drowning. If you wade in and pull the child out, it will mean getting your clothes muddy and either cancelling your lecture or delaying it until you can find something clean and dry to wear. If you pass by the child, then, while you'll give your lecture on time, the child will die straightaway. You pass by and, as expected, the child dies. (ebook, chapter 1.2)

Unger proceeds to offer a second scenario for the purpose of comparison. He writes,

> *The Envelope.* In your mailbox, there's something from…UNICEF. After reading it through, you correctly believe that, unless you soon send in a check for $100, then, instead of each living many more years, over thirty more children will die soon. But, you throw the material in your trash basket, including the

> convenient return envelope provided, you send nothing, and, instead of living many years, over thirty more children soon die than would have had you sent in the requested $100. (Chapter 1.2)

The Shallow Pond is a textbook example of a Near Case while *The Envelope* is an example of a Far Case. What is most significant about this distinction is that it is utilized to justify a supererogatory classification for specific acts of GARO. This is based on the marked difference between people's intuitive responses to *The Shallow Pond* and *The Envelope*. People respond to your inaction in *The Shallow Pond* as a horrible moral wrong whereas people respond to your inaction in *The Envelope* as not wrong at all. This is crucial in that if people are successful in relegating acts of GARO to supererogation, then one has all that is needed to justify GARO inaction in any and all cases desired.

As stated earlier, *The Shallow Pond* is a textbook example of a Near Case in ethics. Regarding this case, Unger writes "almost everyone's intuitive moral judgment is that your conduct's abominable" (Chapter 1.2). It is your duty in this case to muddy your clothes and miss your lecture in order to save the child's life. However, people respond differently to your inaction in *The Envelope.* Unger writes, "To this example, almost everyone reacts that your conduct isn't even wrong at all" (Chapter 1.2). If you did decide to give $100 in *The Envelope*, the overwhelming majority of people would intuitively classify your deed as *supererogatory*. This is significant because intuitions play a significant role in both *forming our moral views* as well as *making moral decisions*. Due to this discrepancy, people infer that giving in *The Envelope* must be supererogatory in nature as well as in all Far Cases.

However, a supererogatory classification for acts of GARO is wrong due to a serious methodological error committed when comparing *The Shallow Pond* and *The Envelope*. As F.M. Kamm points out, there is a methodological requirement to make sure cases are "comparable" when creating them for the purpose of comparison (658). He calls this "equalizing the cases" (658). All factors must be equalized except for one. This isolates the one factor so that then one can decide whether or not that one factor makes a *moral* difference between the two cases. It is quite often assumed that *The Shallow Pond* and *The Envelope* are comparable with one exception, that is, the *distance-factor* (physical proximity between the rescuer and victim). This would make the distance-factor the isolated variable. If this were true and the cases really were comparable, then the difference in people's intuitive responses to the two cases would be reasonable and we would be left with no option but to conclude that *distance* does indeed determine where the greater obligation lies. But they are not comparable. All other factors have not been equalized. Only when a comparable Near and Far Case is utilized (in all factors except *geographical distance*) can it be discovered whether or not the difference between people's intuitive responses is reasonable from a moral standpoint.

Besides physical distance, there are three other variables that have not been equalized. The first concerns *knowledge*. In *The Shallow Pond*, you are the only person who has knowledge of this drowning child. Surely this increases your level of obligation. In *The Envelope*, there are millions of other affluent Americans who are also aware of dying children overseas. This reduces the sense of urgency as well as the sense of obligation one experiences upon hearing *The Envelope.*

The second variable that has not been equalized concerns the *means to rescue.* Once again, in *The Shallow Pond* you are the only one who has the means to rescue. You are the only one who has the ability to wade into the water in time to rescue the child. This is not the case in *The Envelope*. Millions of others who are relatively affluent also have the means to aid dying children in Third-World nations. This is a significant difference in the two cases Unger presents.

The third variable concerns *the nature of the need.* In *The Shallow Pond*, once you wade in and rescue the child, the need has been satisfied and no longer exists. However, in *The Envelope*, no matter how much you give and how often you give, the need will continue to persist. This difference is of no small matter. As Brad Hooker writes, "…what might be required in an isolated case may be different from what is required in a case that will reoccur over and over again" (179). This variable must be equalized.

These three variables suffice to demonstrate that *The Shallow Pond* and *The Envelope*, are not comparable cases. What is needed is a Near Case scenario comparable to The Envelope (a Far Case scenario). I recommend the following replacement:

> *Chicago.* You have lived in Chicago for all of your life. You are a Christian. You have a family of four (you, your wife, a son, and a daughter) and earn enough that after paying bills and putting some in savings, you still have a few hundred dollars left over. You want to spend some of this extra money investing in your family. You go out to eat together, go to the movies from time to time, go bowling, and even a vacation once a year. Even after all this, some money remains. Also, you are well aware that there are thousands of homeless people in

> Chicago. You are also aware that there are several shelters within a few blocks of you that help provide a decent meal, clothing, and shelter to the homeless. They even offer basic skills training in hopes of helping people get a job. One of the shelters just a few blocks from you just put out a sign requesting a $100 donation from individuals. This $100 will provide 30 people with a decent meal, clothing, and shelter for one month. For many of the older homeless, this kind of service could prevent death during the cold winter months. Yet, you choose not to give that month and 200 older homeless people die. You could have saved 30 but chose not to.

This case equalizes the three variables that were responsible for the incomparability of *The Shallow Pond* and *The Envelope*.

To being with, you are no longer the only person who has knowledge of those whose life is at stake in *Chicago* unlike *The Shallow Pond.* This puts the Near Case *Chicago* on equal footing with the Far Case *The Envelope* in regards to this first variable. This is important because this variable alone when not equalized has the potential to create a much greater sense of urgency and obligation in the mind of the rescuer as it did in *The Shallow Pond* as opposed to *The Envelope.*

Second, in the *Chicago* case, you are no longer the only person who has the means to rescue those at risk of dying. Thousands upon thousands of others in Chicago (and even throughout the United States for all concerned citizens) also have the means to rescue. Once again, this is important because many would agree that barring unforeseen oddities, you have an obligation to rescue if you are the only one in the world who has

the means to do so. This is no longer the case because this second variable has been equalized.

And last, the third variable, the *nature of the need,* has also been equalized. Whereas in *The Shallow Pond* your aid eliminated the need altogether, this is not the case in *Chicago*. In *Chicago*, even if you give multiple times, the need is not going away. This now resembles the situation in the Far Case, *The Envelope*. David Schmidtz writes,

> In the end, it seems inescapable that emergencies and chronic problems are two different things. When we assume a burden of long-term care, we give up the life we had. When we help out in a one-shot emergency, we are inconvenienced, maybe even at risk, but we are not abandoning life as a member of a kingdom of ends and replacing it with a new life as a mere means. (700-701)

Most would agree that if you could give and by doing so eliminate the need once and for all, there might exist a stronger obligation for you to do so. But this is no longer the case once the Near and Far Cases have been made comparable.

Once these three variables have been equalized by substituting the Near Case *Chicago* for the Near Case *The Shallow Pond,* the only difference that remains between these two cases is the *distance factor*. Yet, this is not enough to warrant a duty classification for giving aid in a Near Case and a supererogatory classification for giving aid in a Far Case. *Distance* is not nearly as important as people initially assume. One reason people might wrongly think distance matters more than it does is that most people would agree that our strongest obligations are to those in our family. At first glance, this appears to reinforce the idea that geographical distance plays a significant role in determining the level of obligation we feel. Who is usually closer to us in terms of

physical proximity than family? Yet, *distance* is not a factor. Consider the following case:

> *Family.* You move off to Africa while the rest of your family still lives in south Mississippi. While living in Africa, you discover that a man in your village is about to die unless someone can pay $10,000 for him to have a certain kind of surgery. You have gotten to know this man pretty well. At the same time you find this out, you are notified that your brother in south Mississippi is also going to die if he does not undergo a similar $10,000 surgery. For some unbeknownst reason, you are the only one in both situations that has the money to give toward saving either person's life. Whoever you do not give to will die. You choose to save your brother and the man in your African village dies.

In *Family,* saving your brother though he was at a greater distance away was the morally right thing to do. This case demonstrates that in fact, distance had nothing to do with your decision. Your higher level of obligation to your brother was simply because he is a member of your family. The decision had nothing to do with physical proximity. So it suffices to show that distance quite often is irrelevant to the discussion.

In the comparison between *The Shallow Pond* and *The Envelope*, *distance* appeared to be the central factor responsible for people's "disparate responses" (Unger, Chapter 1.2). However, the *distance factor* had not been isolated. It was the other variables not accounted for that was in large part responsible for the mistaken discrepancy in people's intuitive responses between giving aid in Near and Far Cases. Whereas the following rationalization, "*People have stricter, more demanding obligations to those who are near than those who are far,"* appeared to be supported by

the initial Near-Far comparison, this is no longer the case once the two cases were equalized. Thus, the Near-Far bias fails to provide adequate grounds for a person to rationalize away all specific acts of GARO as supererogatory.

One of the more common rationalizations utilized by people to justify GARO inaction stems from a second bias, namely the *Insignificance bias.* This rationalization goes something like this: *Because the number of people dying is so great and the size of my potential contribution is so small, any specific GARO action on my part would not make any difference in the big picture.* This rationalization is less philosophical than the other two. Yet from a psychological perspective, it is quite possibly the most powerful.

At the heart of this rationalization are two things that a Christian cannot accept. First, this bias mistakenly redirects the focus of a Christian to the *enormity of the problem* rather than the *countless individuals that can be helped.* Secondly, this bias is pessimistic in nature and runs against a mindset of faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13:13) that God calls all Christian to embrace in all matters.

The above rationalization represents a failure on the part of a Christian to recognize the value of the individual. When a Christian redirects her focus to the *number* of people suffering and dying rather than the one or two or ten individuals that a specific act of GARO can rescue, she is in danger of forgetting that every single individual matters to God. An out-of-balance focus on *numbers* can result in a Christian discounting the value of saving *one*. Granted, there are sure to be situations where numbers come into play in Christian ethics. The problem is when numbers come into play in such a way that the value of the individual is either minimized or ignored altogether. When a Christian rationalizes GARO inactivity due to the fact that a donation

will not alter the bigger picture, this is exactly what the Christian is guilty of. The individual has been lost and this is what is unacceptable from a Christian perspective. In this regard, Christian ethics closely resembles Kant's ethical system and more specifically, his second formulation of the *Categorical Imperative.* He wrote, "So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only" (23). The *value of the individual* is paramount in Christian ethics and is best articulated in one of the most well-known passages in the entire Bible, namely Luke 15. In this chapter, Jesus told three parables that all shared in common an emphasis upon the value of *one* individual. Of these three, *The Lost Sheep* is the first. Jesus spoke,

> What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!" I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. (Luke 15.4-7)

Passages of this nature are not uncommon throughout the Bible. This passage and others alike serve as a foundation for the Christian belief that every individual is a product of God's *skillful* crafting. What will change is at least one individual's life. This is of immense value in the eyes of God and thus significant. A Christian must make all decisions, including moral ones, with the individual in sight.

Therefore, it is wrong and at odds with Christian principles to reason that there is no point to specific acts of GARO just because a contribution will not make a significant dent in the larger picture. From a Christian perspective, it is paramount to make all moral decisions with an individual-first *mindset*. The appropriate question for a Christian to ask is, "Will my time or money contribution go toward helping at least one individual?" If the answer is *yes*, then the contribution is of great value because every *single* individual is believed to be of great value in the eyes of God. If you give enough money today to save one person from death and thereby give them a future, in the eyes of God you have done a great act of kindness though 23,999 will still die.

The second problem from a Christian perspective with the *Insignificance bias* is that it is pessimistic in nature and runs against an attitude of faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13:13) that God calls all Christians to embrace in all matters. Everyone must admit that there are times that though a Christian is suppose to trust in God, feelings of discouragement can still be overwhelmingly present. This is for the simple reason that Christians are still human and can easily succumb to the fact that in the face of dire global circumstances, at times our best efforts do not seem to make a difference.

This pessimistic attitude stems largely from the first problem. When Christians focus solely on numbers without the individual in sight, one or two specific acts of GARO appear inconsequential. It can be emotionally overwhelming as well as depressing if you focus on the number of people that your donation is not able to rescue. Let us pretend that in the parable of *The Lost Sheep*, everything is the same except that there are nine other sheep lost. So, ten out of the 100 are missing. Once the man realizes this, he sets out to rescue as many as he can. He is only able to rescue one. Will he still

not throw a party? Granted, there will still be sadness and grief in the man's heart because nine are still lost, but this does not belittle the fact that one *individual* sheep has been saved! Though nine are still missing, what reason do we have to think that the man would respond any differently than he did in Luke 15:6? He calls all his friends and neighbors and invite them to rejoice with him.

The attitude of *faith, hope, and love* that Christians are to both embody and exude are three powerful attitudes. Love says that *one* individual matters. Faith in God is essentially what a person has when she chooses to trust in God for all things, whether salvation, healing, basic needs, finances, or any other kind of help. Hope believes that things can get better, that we can make a difference, and that God is at work even when it does not appear so. Faith, hope, and love is about a Christian trusting God that God is in control and that every act of helping people counts because each individual is a person that God loves immensely. Though it will be discouraging at times, a pessimistic attitude cannot be the attitude that dictates the overall attitude of a Christian. A Christian must not lose sight of the individual that can be rescued in the midst of a crowd. If a Christian does not have this kind of faith, hope, and love within, it will be just a matter of time before one experiences a serious, paralyzing despair over the vast numbers of people dying. So while Christians need to acknowledge global realities, Christians must have the faith, hope, and love necessary to see that even a small act of GARO counts in the eyes of God.

A Christian must be careful not to give place to the *Insignificance bias*. It may very well be true that a single contribution is nothing more than a drop in a bucket. However, in the eyes of God, every *drop* may be rescuing another individual. From his

perspective, even one individual is significant no matter how many remain. This will prevent a Christian from falling prey to the *Insignificance bias.* A Christian who does not fall prey to this *bias* will find it much easier to resist a pessimistic attitude in favor of *faith, hope,* and *love*. This positive attitude will serve as a continual motivator for Christians who are choosing specific acts of GARO as the way to fulfill the broad duty to help those in need.

The third bias that people sometimes use to rationalize GARO inaction is the *Line bias*. This rationalization is as follows: *Because there is no clear cutoff point as to when the duty to help those in need has been fulfilled, this allows people to rationalize that they have done their duty even when they have not.* In other words, because there is not a *line* that can be looked at to determine how far one needs to go in order to fulfill the broad duty to help those in need, people let themselves off the hook far too easily. This problem is often rooted in wrong and unacceptable motives for a Christian. For others, the absence of a clear fulfillment condition (that is, where the line is) serves as a justification to dismiss specific acts of GARO altogether. This problem is conceptual in nature. I will begin with the conceptual problem first because it undergirds the second.

Many people might rationalize GARO inactivity on the basis that if GARO really is a particularly good way to fulfill the broad duty to help those in need, there should be a clear fulfillment condition so that one can know when the broad duty has been fulfilled. I dealt with this toward the end of section one in this chapter. With broad duties, there is no *clear fulfillment condition*. To demand such a thing would lead to a person ignoring every broad duty. The reason that there is not a clear fulfillment condition for the duty to help people in need is because with broad duties, the exact amount required is and will

always be *indeterminate*. This stems from the fact that broad duties prescribe general maxims that are to be put into practice *sometimes* and *to some extent* (Hill 204). One should not approach acts of GARO with the mindset one might have when paying taxes or buying something from the store. In both of these instances, one knows exactly how much to pay and once paid, nothing else is owed. The moral decisions a Christian faces day in and day out are not always so straightforward. To dismiss specific acts of GARO on the grounds that a clear fulfillment condition is not present reveals a gross misunderstanding of the nature of broad duties altogether. Whether acts of GARO, donating time to serve in the local homeless shelter, or giving money to help a single mom who is struggling to make ends meet, the amount required is indeterminate and the decision as to how much to give must be made again and again in every new situation.

When someone does not take into consideration the nature of *broad* duties, then this conceptual misunderstanding can lead to a person using the *Line bias* to mistakenly rationalize certain behaviors. Without a *clear fulfillment condition* line, it is so much easier for a moral agent to rationalize that she has fulfilled her broad duty to help those in need when in fact she has not. Consider the following case:

> Jane is an affluent Christian in America who at the end of every month has $1,000 left over after all bills are paid. Jane sends in a $10 gift once a year to World Vision and does not give in any other way to anybody else. This $10 rescues one life. Jane receives a letter in the mail from World Vision thanking her for the support. She then reasons that she has fulfilled her duty as a Christian to help people in need.

No matter what Jane might think, anyone who reads this would agree that Jane has not fulfilled her duty as a Christian to help those in need. Though an exact line is not known, it does seem that we can discern case by case whether one has responded as a Christian should. What she did is simply not enough. However, because there is not a *clear fulfillment condition* line predetermined, the door is left open for Jane to rationalize in her mind that she has fulfilled her duty. This is the danger of the *Line bias*.

This rationalization made possible by the absence of a clear fulfillment condition reveals two unacceptable motives that quite often can lie behind a Christian's actions such as Jane's. First, her giving appears to be motivated more by a desire to appease her conscience rather than being about helping people in need. With her level of affluence, the amount she is giving is so small it seems as if she is giving in order to feel like she has done what she was suppose to do. But one could give in such a way and it not at all have anything to do with actually helping others. From a Christian standpoint, this would not be morally acceptable. The motive behind the action needs to be right as well. Ultimately, her motive was selfish in nature. In Christianity, even if you do what you are suppose to, you still have not done the right thing unless your motive is right as well. Right motive must be wedded to right action. Paul addressed this when he wrote, "And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3). Without the proper motivation of love, feeding the poor locally or overseas (that is, GARO) still falls short of what is God expects of a Christian. One must not only help people in need, but do so with the right motive.

The second motive that is unacceptable from a Christian perspective is trying to get away with the *bare minimum*. This is what Jane appears to be doing. When a Christian attempts to do nothing more than the bare minimum, she in essence is merely trying to check items off a list. In other words, do just enough to be done with it. Yet, this is problematic because this could not be further away from the lifestyle Christians are to live. Christians are expected to life a lifestyle of helping people in need. It is not something one keeps count of. It is not something one is trying to check off a list. It is a way of life that will require hundreds if not thousands of acts throughout a lifetime. As long as people are suffering and in need, Christians will be called upon to give and give again. With the life of Christ as an model for all Christians, doing the bare minimum is out of touch with what Christ wanted his followers to emulate and for this reason, is unacceptable for Christians everywhere.

One qualification needs mentioning. It is also possible to have the right motives yet not follow through with the actual act of helping people in need. This too is condemned from a Christian standpoint. As stated earlier, both the action and the right motive are important to God.

Any rationalizations originating from the *Line bias* are not to be used by Christians. Just because broad duties such as *to help people in need* do not have a clear fulfillment condition, this does not mean that a Christian can rationalize from this bias that one has fulfilled the broad duty to help those in need when in fact one has not. This often is a cover up for motives that are unacceptable from a Christian perspective. This applies to all specific behaviors such as acts of GARO or any others that could be chosen by an individual to fulfill the broader duty to help those in need.

In this chapter, I argued in section one that specific acts of GARO are *particularly* good ways for a Christian to fulfill the broader duty to help those in need. This is largely due to the fact that poverty overseas is much worse than local poverty. This is also the case because the desperately poor overseas are much less likely to receive assistance whereas our local poor have more options available. In section two, I addressed three biases that often stand in the way of specific GARO acts. A Christian does well to include specific acts of GARO as a *particularly* good way to fulfill the broader duty to help people in need.

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